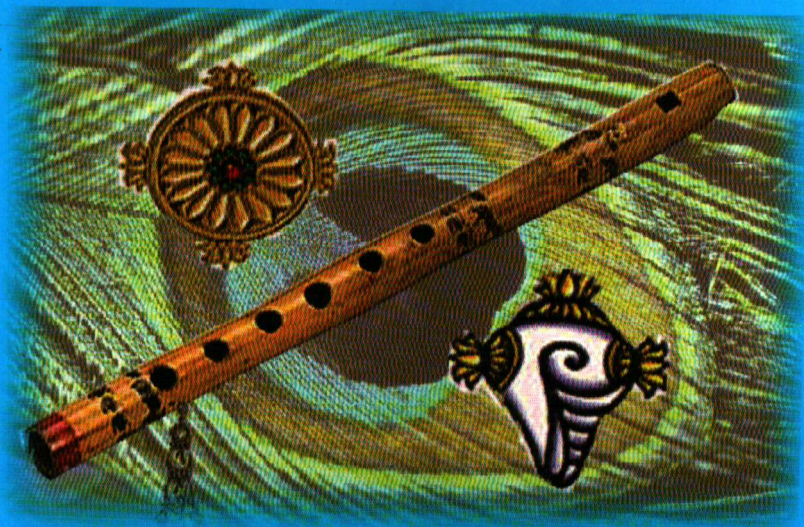


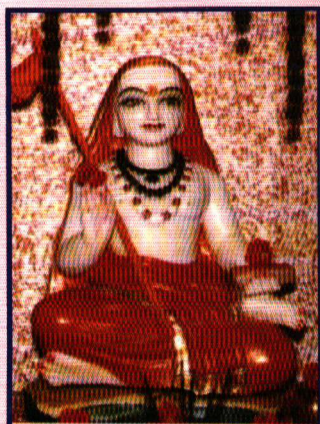
VAISHNAVAITE SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY



Dr. A. Thiruvengadathan

**VAISHNAVA MAHA SAMMELAN
COMMEMORATION VOLUME**

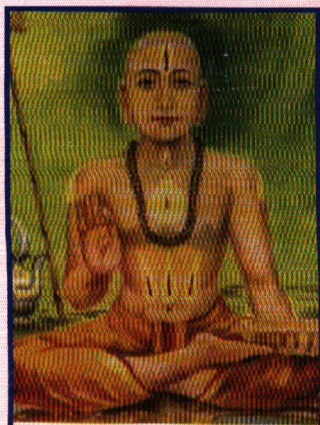
12-03-2006



SRI SANKARACHARYA



SRI RAMANUJACHARYA



SRI NIMBARKA



SRI MADVACHARYA

TRIBUTE TO A SCHOLAR OF EMINENCE

Brief write-ups on the Vaishnava acharyas who popularised the Bhakti movement in the various parts of this country by adopting ways and means suitable to the local masses are now being published in a Book form as a tribute to the late Nyaya-Vedanta Vidwan Sri.Uvc. Karappangadu Venkatacharya Swami on the occasion of his Centennial Celebrations. The Swami with his deep knowledge of Sastra and Sampradaya strode like a Colossus among the learned in the religious field. He lived between 1906 and 1971. His impressive personality matched his immaculate learning and teaching skills. The Swami's contribution to Srivaishnavism by way of lectures and writings can not be obliterated by Time.

The Book was formally released during the Vaishnava Maha Sammelan at Srirangam on March 12, 2006 by H.H. Madhava priya Dasji of Shri Swaminarayan Sampradaya (Ahmedabad) and the first copy was received by H.H. Dr. Brindhavan Biharidassji of Shri Nimbarka Sampradaya (Varanasi).

VAISHNAVAITE SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY

Dr. A. Thiruvengadathan, M.A., Ph.D.,
(Former Principal, D.G. Vaishnav College, Chennai-106 &
M.O.P. Vaishnav College for Women, Chennai-34)

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Sri Kaliyan Vanamamalai Ramanuja Jeer Swami**

Sri:

Place : Nanguneri

Date : 3. 3. 2006

MANGALASASANAM

My Beloved Spiritual Friends !

Just Yesterday forenoon I received a beautiful script from my dearest and respectable Srivaishnava spiritual friend of mine, Dr. A. Thiruvengadathan, who had been Professor, Head of the Department of Sanskrit and the Principal of the very reputed D.G. Vaishnava College and M.O.P. Vaishnava College for women at Chennai for several years.

He has taken the concept of Bhakti towards God Almighty, Srimannarayana as the main subject for his most valuable book. He has depicted this subject dealing with the quintessence of the Bhakti concepts of Adi Sankaracharya, Sri Ramanujacharya, Sri Ananda Tirtha (Sri Madhvacharya), Sri Nimbarka, Sri Vallabhacharya,

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Sri Ramananda, etc., who are very great devotees and founders of different faiths in our Punyabhoomi - Bharat. He has taken pains to write the Monographs on the above saints in the most impressive manner. His English is crisp and a little high flown using many appropriate and beautiful technical terms.

Though there was not enough time to go through the entire script letter by letter, I could read fast within a limited time available to me, despite my heavy and busy schedule here and elsewhere. But that does not mean that I have missed to enjoy the contents.

I have all hope that the script given to me for perusal will find its book-shape at the earliest, reach the hands of discerning readers and prove its worth.

I convey my whole-hearted Mangalasanams to my spiritual friend Dr. A. Thiruvengadathan and pray at the lotus feet of Srimannarayana for a long and healthy life for him in this Lilavibhuti of God.

I also congratulate the organisers of the Vaishnava Maha Sammelan for arranging to release the book "Vaishnavaitic Schools of Philosophy" at the conference.

(Sd/-) SRIRAMANUJAN
(Sri Kaliyan Vanamamalai
Ramanuja Jeeyar)

Dr. V. V. Ramanujam,
M.A., M.Sc., Ph.D. (Tulane)
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FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to write a Foreword to the excellent book on Vaishnavism - **Vaishnavaithe Schools of Philosophy** by my esteemed friend Dr. A. Thiruvengadathan, retired Principal of D.G. Vaishnava College and M.O.P. Vaishnava College for Women and Honorary Professor of Sanskrit, Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, Chennai-4. His deep Scholarship in Sanskrit and Tamil and our Sampradaya as well as his long experience as a teacher at the Collegiate level spanning some four decades render him eminently qualified to write a book of this nature.

The book is a collection of monographs of the various Vaishnavaithe movements or systems as preached by the great Thinkers and Bhaktas in this vast country of ours. Unfortunately I could not go through the entire script for want of time but that does not deter me from writing this foreword.

The book begins with an analysis of the development of the Bhakti School right from early times. It is a well thought out introduction to the subject. The next chapter is on Sankaracharya. Though Sankara's Absolute Brahman is pure Jnana, Formless, Nameless and bereft of attributes, he recognises the need for a personal God - the so-called 'Vyavaharika' - for practical religion presented in our Scriptures, Srutis, Smritis, Itihasas and Puranas. The author rightly observes "Sankara is more eloquent than Ramanuja in stressing the identity of this Supreme God-head as Vishnu-Narayana and the reward that one seeking salvation will attain namely, the "Supreme Abode of Vishnu". Sankara's commentaries on the Bhagvad Gita and Sri Vishnu Sahasranama as well as Stotras - Bhaja Govindam and the like reveal that he is a great devotee of Vishnu-Narayana.

The life and Philosophy of Ramanuja have received an elaborate treatment for obvious reasons. The author is guided by *Yatindramatadipika* in bringing out the tenets of Visishtadvaita. This is followed by a discussion of the lives, works and the contrubutions of a succession of great Acharyas in the chronological order - Sri Nimbarka, Sri Madhvacharya, Sri Ramananda, Sri Vallabhacharya, Sri Chaitanya, Sri Sankara Deva and Sri Swaminarayan.

The author presents the views of each one of these Acharyas clearly and provides a fund of information on the life and works of the Acharyas who flourished in North India and not very familiar to the people in the Southern part of this country. The influence of Ramanuj's teachings on these Acharyas is clearly brought out. One aspect emerges in common. These Acharyas are so intensely devoted to Sri Krishna and Sri Rama that they (Acharyas) consider them as the Supreme God-head, and that Narayana represented in the Srutis as Supreme Brahman is but an aspect of Sri Krishna.

The various aspects of Bhakti, the Swami-dasa Bhava, Nayaka-Nayika Bhava (lower and beloved relationship) Maternal affection (as in the case of Yasoda and Krishna) Paternal attitude, friendship (Sneha / Sakhya) are all highlighted at relevant places.

Dr. Thiruvengadathan has brought to bear his very rich teaching experience in writing each of the chapters in a lucid manner affording a very clear understanding of the subject. The book will be of great interest to a lay reader to learn and appreciate the teachings of the various Acharyas.

I congratulate Dr. Thiruvendgadathan on the production of a very useful book - a lasting contribution to Vaishnava Literature.

Triplicane
04.03.2006

V.V. RAMANUJAN
(Sampradayaratnam
Srivaishnava Simham)

PREFACE

I am extremely happy to present monographs on select Philosophers who subscribed to the concept of Vishnu-Narayana being the Supreme Brahman. To many Philosophers the Supreme Brahman is Sri Krishna an incarnation of Vishnu, the exception being Sri Ramananda whose philosophy centres round Sri Rama another incarnation. It should be noted that these two incarnations are full-fledged ones (Purna Avataras) signifying that they were not divested of the qualities of Supreme Brahman despite their being incarnations. Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavata have been conferred the status of a Prasthana (Book of authority) as these are glorifications of the above two incarnations.

While Goddess Sri is the inseparable companion of Narayana according to Ramanuja School, Radha instead of Rukmini is the consort of Sri Krishna according to the adherents of the Bhakti Schools of the North. It is worth reminding ourselves that in the South, Nappinnai, the daughter of a herdsman as Radha was, is as much a celebrated consort of Sri Krishna according to the hymns of the Alvars and early Tamil Literature. Sri Krishna's sports with the gopis among whom Radha was prominent are highly enchanting and emotive. Naturally the schools subscribing to *Madhura Bhakti* as opposed to *Aiswarya Bhakti* have chosen Radha and Krishna as the Universal Pair worthy of adoration.

Bhakti-Prapatti formula of Sri Ramanuja has served as a beacon light for the successive acharyas to present their own interpretations for the means and the end of spiritual endeavour. That is why Ramanuja's Philosophy has been

treated in a slightly greater detail. Sri Sankaracharya who is projected as a pure Vedantin was not averse to devotion to Narayana. Hence he finds a place in the collection of monographs.

It is not necessary here to dissect whether the acharyas treated in the monographs were pure philosophers or pure religionists. They (acharyas) represent the fusion of Philosophy and Religion which indicates the fusion of Mind and Heart.

The monographs are only summary treatments of the life and philosophy of the chosen saints and are just intended to highlight the various hues of the pan-Indian character of Vaishnavism.

I offer my respectful thanks to H.H.Kaliyan Vanamamalai Ramanuja Jeeyar Swami for forwarding his *mangalasanam* in the midst of his tight schedule. My abundant thanks are due to Srivaishnavasimham Dr.V.V.Ramanujan Swami for writing a pithy Foreword. I also thank Dr.M.A.Venkatakrishnan for his readiness to offer help whenever solicited.

It is my fervent hope that this compilation of monographs of well-known saints will be enjoyed by the readers with relish.

This collection is dedicated to all the religious leaders assembled at the Vaishnava Maha Sammelan.

Srirangam
12. 3. 2006.

A. Thiruvengadathan.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of writing monographs on the authors of the Bhakti school - with their bhakti directed towards Sriman-narayana called under different names like Vasudeva, Vishnu, and Krishna - is to expose the underlying concept of Bhakti (whatever it means) in those schools having different epistemological and ontological approaches. The intellectual approach to one's God - may be Brahman, the formless, attributeless entity - may be very difficult not only for ordinary men, sometimes even for extra-ordinary men. But an emotional approach to an all-merciful God who is ever ready or more ready than the supplicant to take him under His graceful protection should be quite easy. To treat his personal god as his own father who is ever willing to accept his prodigal son or as a lover or beloved who turns a blind eye to the lapses on the part of his or her counterpart is the easiest way to win the love divine, the summum bonum of the quest after God. This man - God relationship has been handled in a variety of ways. In the history of Indian Philosophy the change in the concept of God from an impersonal, attributeless and formless entity to God with all lovely and lovable attributes and having a form of alluring beauty ever ready to accept a prodigal jiva once he regrets his prodigality,

and shows an inclination towards divine acceptance, went through a process taking a long time. And this was made possible by bringing in adjustments and compromises in the early segments of the process.

Let us take a brief survey of these adjustments. Mandana Misra sometimes identified with Suresvara and more or less a contemporary of Sankara takes the individual souls as the locus of *avidya* and not Brahman. He also holds that a Jivanmukta cannot claim to be a *siddhapurusha*. He is only a *sadhaka* and *siddhi* is possible only with the destruction of the body despite the annihilation of *avidya*. Sarvajnatman and Vimuktatman (followers of Sankara) held that due to the lingering of a speck of *avidya*, a *jivanmukta* has to wait till the *prarabdha karma* ends with the fall of the body. Sarvajnatman is not against *Parinamavada* (the view of Ramanuja) but takes it as a step towards *Vivartavada*. Vacaspatimisra - most probably a younger contemporary of Sankara - in his attempt to synchronise the views of Mandanamisra with those of Sankara comes out with a proposition that the jivas are the locus of both jnana and ajnana (*avidya*). Sriharsha (12th century) has attempted one more compromise and comes closer to dualistic view by holding that differences in the perceptible world are there but they are apparent and that the *pramanas* though valid for all practical purposes and pointing to differences in the world are incompetent to negate the one and only reality, Brahman.

Appaya Dikshita (16th cent.) supported the doctrine of *Visishtabrahmavada* with Siva as the Supreme God. It is

not a question of the nomenclature of the god-head that matters but the fact that monism has slowly taken the garb of monotheism comes to the surface. Now the ground has become favourable for Bhakti to sprout. To whom else Bhakti can be addressed other than Krishna? Madhusudana Sarasvati became a staunch devotee of Krishna taking him to be Para-tattva while permitting compromises in the advaitic tenets. Dry intellectual approach to God-realisation has gradually given in for a devotional approach which is natural to the fibre of human psyche. In his *Bhaktirasayana* Madhusudanaarasvati tries to harmonise bhakti-ideal with advaitic ideal. The Kathopanishad text '*naisha tarkena matirapaniya*' (1.2.9) is relevant in this context. It is not very difficult to understand that Sankara himself is not averse to the view that Vasudeva – Narayana is the Supreme God - head and that He shows a special favour to His devotees. The fact that he chose to comment on *Vishnu Sahasranama* apart from Prasthanatraya adds strength to the above view. "The application of the modern critical apparatus raises considerable doubt whether the monistic interpretation of Brahmasutra by Sankaracharya is always loyal and faithful to the views preached in the text itself." (S.N. DasGupta in his Introduction to Volume III of *Cultural Heritage of India* ,p.7) The purpose of introducing Sankara and his contribution in this collection of studies is to inform the reader that Sankara himself is not against a personal God full of mercy and grace and that he is none other than Vasudeva-Narayana.

While Nimbarka, Ramananda, and Svaminarayana are closely following the concept of Supreme God as Krishna

or Narayana on the lines of Ramanuja with the Jivas and the non-sentient world as His adjuncts, Madhva takes a different approach. To him, the Supreme Lord, Vishnu is quite independent and different from Sentients and Non sentients. He confers such supreme independence to make the Godhead appear absolutely defectless and distinct and asserts that his *bhedavada* is to assert the 'adoshatva' or 'defectlessness' of Brahman. (*tasya bhedas'ca sarvata(h) adoshatvasya siddhyartham*). Caitanya was very much influenced by Madhva. Vallabha presents his Brahman as 'Suddha' in the sense that it is free from Maya and 'advaita' in the sense of unparalleled supremacy without a 'second'. In essence, Vallabha's philosophy is revolving around 'a nondual Brahman untouched by Maya'. His god is Krishna - a *purna purushottama* and stresses on the Lord's grace which he calls '*pushti*' as responsible for a man's emancipation. He harps on *pushti-bhakti* and suggests *pushti prapatti* as an alternative. In the case of post-Ramanuja philosophers there is a broad agreement in regard to a Supreme God attended by auspicious qualities, but there occur different nomenclatures in presenting their respective philosophies. Bhakti addressed to Narayana or Vishnu or Krishna with a sense of resignation on the part of the aspirant is central to all these systems.

Bhakti is basically a love-based attachment. This is the postulate of Ramanuja (*bhaktisca pritivishaye vartate-Vedartha-sangraha*) who treats this loving attachment as resulting from *jnana*. This *jnana* itself contributes to sublime joy. This is one point of view. Since the soul is subservient (*sesha*) to the Lord, through subservience (*seshatva*) a

master- servant relationship (*Sevya-sevaka bhava*) is established and here also this service should be prompted by love. Service imposed or bargained for a price cannot have the backing of love. This is another view. An attachment is natural between equals and this is friendship (*sneha—tulyayo(h) ya parasparam priti(h) sa sneha (h)*). The Lord can be approached by a devotee in a friendly manner. This is Sakhyabhava which we come across in the case of gopas (cowherds) in their attitude to Krishna. Almost all the schools of North Indian Vaishnavism reserve a place for this *sakhyabhava* but this bhava is generally considered inferior to another form of sakhyabhava viz. *madhurabhava* which is the basis of lover-beloved relationship. In the lover-beloved relationship (the devotee can be the lover or the beloved and the Lord (usually Krishna) can be the beloved or the lover), it is possible to treat one or the other superior to the counterpart. In the North Indian Schools of Vaishnavism we find both categories. While Ramanuja and his followers favour *dasya-bhakti* or *sevya-sevakabhava* based on *sesha-seshi* relationship, the North Indian saints favour *madhurabhakti*. This form of bhakti took its source from Bengal and its surroundings. Jayadeva of the 12th century popularised this kind of bhakti movement. But successive leaders cautioned people of the dangers lurking behind such a mad madhura-bhakti that may affect a devotee who has no physical and mental discipline.

At this point it is worth taking note of Swaminarayan's intensive caution. He did not attach too much importance to monks although he prescribed for them a severe discipline. To maintain their status as 'Tyagis' they must be willing to

sacrifice even normal comforts. He must have felt that a disciplined house-holder's life is far superior to that of a Sanyasin and that is perhaps the reason for his prescribing initiation to the aspirants of monkhood under house holder – acharyas. Swaminaryan also expected that both husband and wife must be religiously trained, educated and ordained to enable male disciples to be taken care of by the male gurus and female disciples, by female gurus. He advised his disciples to maintain proper accounts of their income and expenditure and to maintain legal documents for all their transactions. He must have noticed wealthy widows being cheated in the name of religion and hence warned them to take care of their needs first and spend for religious and charitable purposes only the surplus fund, if any left. Swaminarayan has taken great pains to maintain a peaceful social order.

The next step may be termed the real bhakti which stands for a selfless attachment of the lowly (the Jivas) with all their imperfections, for the highest viz. the Supreme God characterised by reality (satya), auspiciousness (siva) and beauty(sundara)(*anuttamasya uttame rati (h) prasakti(h). sa(h) bhaktisabdavacya*). The term 'bhakti' normally implies a deep passion exhibited by a sadhaka for attaining divine favour and this implies an effort—sadhana signifying the various devotional practices like sravana, kirtana etc., But the real goal is sadhya bhakti which occurs when the heart of the devotee is graced by Krishna through His special power called svarupa-sakti. This is the essence of the teaching of Caitanya. The terms sadhana-bhakti and sadhya -bhakti handled in the Caitanya School may approximate to

the terms prevalent in Srivaishnava parlance but the intents and implications are entirely different in the latter School. Bhakti as defined above is somewhat akin to what Vedanta Desika expressed in his Gitarthasangraharaksha (Introduction) "*mahaniyavishaye rati (h) bhakti(h)*".

There is a third step in handling the attachment found between the devotee and the Lord. This is called *Vatsalya* defined as '*Uttamasya anuttame rati (h)*', the attachment that the All-perfect harbours for the imperfect. These definitions of the types of attachment - *sneha*, *bhakti* and *vatsalya* explained above come from a literary critic Siddha Hemachandra (12th century). These definitions have a relevance in Theology as well. While the definition for *vatsalya* comes very close to Srivaishnava concept of *vatsalya*, the North Indian Schools of Vaishnavism conferred only a limited scope to this concept. In the Caitanya School, *Vatsalya* and *Prema* are considered as delectable *rasas* with a sense of 'my-ness' (*mamakara*) in *Vatsalya* and softening of mind (*citta-drava*) as the prominent mood. At this point it is easy to accept *Bhakti* as a Sentiment. Thus, many North Indian leaders of *Bhakti* movement treated the *Vatsalya* motif by portraying the interaction between the mother *Yasoda* and child *Krishna* in a variety of ways. In South India, *Periyalvar* and *Kulasekhara Alvar* are prominent examples of this *matru-vatsalya*. The mother's deep attachment to the child and her admiration for its antics are the central theme for this kind of *Vatsalya-bhakti*. *Vallabha's* concept of *Bhakti* is centred on *Krishna* as a child and the worship is addressed to *Krishna* under various names

pointing to his childhood (of course with some exceptions) viz. Mathuradhisa, Vitthalnath and Dwarakadhisa. Prema, the basis for madhura-bhava is a part of Vallabha's concept of Pushtibhakti.

Ramanuja while championing Sesha-Seshi Bhava equates seva with bhakti and says seva is not different from Jnana. This concept of seva is none other than (*atma-yathatma-jnana*) -knowledge of the essential nature of the soul as dependent and subservient to the Lord. Sudarsanasuri (author of *Srutaprakasika*) while elucidating (bhaktirupa seva) service in the form of bhakti (concluding part of *Vedartha samgraha*) quotes a passage from the Vrtti of Bodhayana which clearly establishes bhakti-seva equation,

bhaja ityesha dhaturvai sevayam parikirtita(h) /

tasmat seva budhai(h) prokta bhakti s'abdena bhuyasi //

and strengthens his equation by quoting the synonyms of seva viz. bhakti and upasti (upasana). The term upasti means Vedana or Jnana. All this exercise is meant to accommodate all the activities of the soul towards liberation, under Jnana (*bhaktirupapannajnana*) according to Ramanuja.

This term seva though favoured by all the champions of the Bhakti school in some way or other has a special appeal to Vallabha who recommends seva for those who are incompetent to follow Pushti-bhakti. He classifies seva

under three heads *manasi* (mental), *tanuja* (physical) and *vittaja* (by spending money in the cause of temples and devotees). Here Seva has a limited meaning of service.

We have already seen that though Sankara did not straight away accept (i) bhakti as a potent means of liberation and a personal god with charming attributes and full of grace, his intentions are in that direction. The followers of Sankara adopted several adjustments, which exposed the mind of Sankara. Ramanuja without disputing Sankara's advocacy of Jnana as the means of liberation stressed that Bhakti should precede Jnana and that Bhakti itself is a special form of Jnana. Thereafter Bhakti received a great emphasis at the hands of Nimbarka, Madhva, Caitanya, Vallabha, Ramananda, Sankara Deva and Swaminarayan. This brief survey is sure to reveal that Bhakti had its roots in South India and grew into a mammoth tree spreading its multiple branches in North India.

In this context, it is worth recalling what the *Bhagavata* Purana has to say on the worship of Narayana and the spread of Bhakti concept from South to North. In Skanda 11-Adhyaya-5, the *Bhagavata* gives a vivid description of Vasudeva appearing white in complexion in Krtayuga, red in Tretayuga, bluish in Dvaparayuga and black in Kaliyuga. The black colour patently signifies Krishna. Only by singing the glories of Krishna, people attain whatever they desire and realise peace. The *Bhagavata* further predicts that in Kali age those totally dedicated to Narayana will be born mostly in Dravida country, though a few will take birth elsewhere as well. In the *Padmapurana* we come across a

symbolical account of the spread of Bhakti. Bhakti is symbolised as a lovely maiden with two sons — Jnana and Vairagya. She was born in Dravida desa, turned into a lovely woman in Kamataka and exhibited signs of old age in certain parts of Maharashtra and Gurjara (Gujarat). But on reaching Vrindavana, Bhakti became quite young while her sons Jnana and Vairagya could not shirk their oldness. Narada persuaded them to recite the Vedas and study the *Bhagavad Gita*. There was no change in the boys. When they started studying the *Bhagavata*, they became strong and lovely. Bhakti devi held them by her arms and danced joyously praising Krishna. Sanaka and others prayed to Bhakti devi to continuously reign in the hearts of all Vaishnavas. The message through this allegory is loud and clear. Even the Lord descended from his Divine abode to reside in the pure hearts of the Vaishnavas. The unity of the country is best achieved not by judicial pronouncements or military commands but by Vishnubhakti enthroned in the hearts of all the citizens.

SRI SANKARACHARYA

Sri Sankaracharya is a profound thinker, a great philosopher and a devout poet as well. He is rightly considered as one of the great philosophers of the world. Western scholars of the previous century took the term 'Vedanta' for Advaita Vedanta; for, the Acharya propounded the monistic or non dualistic Vedanta with an admirable perspicacity and wisdom. Nonetheless he is quite popular through his myriad stotras and poems like Bhajagovindam though Sri Sankara's authorship of some stotras are a matter of dispute. That he founded the six cults(*shanmata*) Vaishnava, Saiva, Sakta, Saura, Ganapatya and Kaumara and that he recommended *Panchayatana puja* representing symbols of Vishnu, Siva, Ganesa Sakti (Parvati) and Surya was not only not supported by convincing and incontrovertible documentary evidence but also stands as a stark contrast to Sri Sankara's non-dualistic philosophical character. That he was a staunch devotee of Vishnu is dealt with subsequently.

Sri Sankara was born at a time when our country could not easily shake off the hold of materialists, sceptics and agnostics. The Carvakas or the pure materialists attracted people by their 'entertaining speech' stressing that

enjoying pleasure at all costs is the only goal of human existence. The pure materialists preached absolute freedom for the individual and for the society. This freedom though pleasant to the individuals, the society suffered on account of the clash of the free thinkers. A kind of ethics was needed. The Buddha appeared on the scene and there is some reason to believe the view that the Buddha was a Carvaka in a sense. Even though he did not believe in rituals and God, but he advocated ethics and a pure life for an individual. Though Buddhism and its precursor Jainism preached a hatred for the Vedic school of thought, they did not spare the materialists even. The result was that the materialists had to face a relentless attack both by Buddhist-Jain combination and the votaries of the Vedic school. Further the Vedic school adapted itself to the changing needs of the society by bringing in Smritis and Dharmasastras. The Carvakas got totally lost in the battle; but Buddhism and Jainism did not face complete annihilation as they were idealistic but all the same their effectiveness got dwindled. This was the back-drop at the time of the appearance of Sri Sankara in the philosophical scene.

Prior to the appearance of Sankara, his (real or inspirational) Guru Gaudapada set the pace for monistic philosophy. Though Gaudapada is suspected to be a Buddhist saint by some western scholars, Gaudapada seems to have been a devotee of Narayana. According to Anandagiri, a disciple of Sankara, Gaudapada performed penance at Badarikasrama where Narayana appeared before him to inculcate philosophical truth. Gaudapada wrote a *Karika* on Mandukya Upanishad. The *Karika* enunciates the

relative and the phenomenal nature of the Universe and the logical validity of Advaita. According to Gaudapada, the Self undergoes different experiences in the waking (*Jagrat*) dreaming (*Svapna*) and dreamless sleep (*Sushupti*) states. It is the ignorance that makes the Self feel pain or pleasure in these states. In the last state (*turiya*) which is pure Jnana, the differences get obliterated and pure monism is realised. So Gaudapada is the pioneer of Advaita philosophy but whether the meeting of Gaudapada and Sankara as given in some accounts happened in the physical plane is a matter of discussion.

The Life of Sankara

Sankara who is believed to be an incarnation of Siva was born at Kaladi in the family of Nambudiris noted for their erudition in Sanskrit and Vedas. His parents were Sivaguru and Aryamba. As a result of their prayers Sankara was born. The birth of the son did not give them unmixed happiness as they knew that the boy would be super-intelligent but endowed with a short span of life. The actual date of Sankara's birth has necessitated a lot of debate. There are several Sankaravijayas (life-histories of Sankara) which give varying dates. According to some scholars it is 6th century B.C. Some suggest 1st century. A.D. According to one account the actual time was the fifth day of the bright half of Vaisakha and according to another account it is the tenth day of the bright half. The birth star is Ardra (Tiruvadirai) like that of Ramanuja. It is very interesting that their birth is usually celebrated on the same day. The modern researchers including Western critics accept 788 A.D as

Sankara's date of birth which fits in well with the developments in the field of Indian philosophy.

At a tender age, Sankara substituted himself for his father Sivaguru to offer milk to Goddess Durga at the local temple. The Goddess not only partook of the milk but offered a little to the boy. Sankara went through the Upanayana ceremony at the age of five and within a short time his father passed away. As a young celibate he was collecting alms from all households. One lady was so poor that she could offer nothing more than an amla (Indian gooseberry). The young boy invoked Goddess Lakshmi in mouthful verses (known as Kanakadharastava) and the lady's house was filled with golden amlas. (This anecdote reminds us of a similar account in the life of Vedanta Desika)

Even though Aryamba, like any other fond mother desired that her son should marry, Sankara's mind was inclined towards the turiyasrama i.e. the state of a Sanyasi. He was also aware that he was destined to live for only eight years. He wanted to enact a drama. Once, when he entered into the river, he let himself to be caught by a crocodile and suggested to his mother that he would escape the grip of the crocodile if she permitted him to switch to the life of a recluse. Remorsefully she gave permission. Since as a recluse he cannot stay with his mother, Sankara left his home and journeyed northwards in search of a guru. In the meanwhile the crocodile which was in fact a Gandharva in that form on account of a curse, also regained his original form and disappeared.

Sankara met his guru Govinda Bhagavatpada on the banks of the river Narmada. The guru, greatly pleased with the knowledge of Sankara initiated him into the order of a sannyasi in the sastraic manner. Bidden by his guru, Sankara stayed at Benares (Varanasi) to write a commentary on Brahmasutras. Sankara was around twelve at that time.

One Vishnuserman who met Sankara (at Gokarna, Karnataka) and also Govinda Bhagavatpada, took to sannyasa taking the name Citsukha. He was the first disciple of Sankara and also wrote a memoir of Sankara named Brhat Sankara Vijaya.

The next disciple was Sanandana, a devotee of Lord Narasimha who acquired the name Padmapada as he, responding to the call of Sankara, crossed the Ganges by walking on the waters when lotuses sprouted below every stepping of his. The third disciple was one Prithvidhara who lost his power of speech as a young boy. In the presence of Sankaracharya he not only started speaking but composed several verses which go by the name Hastamalaka-stotra. The fourth disciple of Sankaracharya was one Anandagiri who praised his guru in eight beautiful verses in the metre Totaka. He was hence called Totakacharya.

At Varanasi, the Acharya wrote a commentary on the Vishnu Sahasranama and composed the Bhaja Govindam otherwise known as Mohamudgaram. While passing through a narrow lane in Varnasi, a man of low caste accompanied by four dogs stood in the way of the Acharya and when driven away, the low caste man replied that the difference of high

and low does not apply to the Soul which is like the bright sun getting reflected manifold in pools of water (comparable to the material bodies). Sankara realising the accosted person to be the supreme Lord, (and the dogs representing the Vedas) recited the Manishapancakam.

The Acharya moved on to Badarikasrama where he met Gaudapada in a cave. (Some biographers maintain that such a meeting was in a yogic plane and it was not a physical meeting. In the same manner the Acharya met Vyasa also) According to a legend, Sankara had an unending argument with Vyasa on a section of the Brahmasutras. Finding that he was arguing with Vyasa, the Acharya recited a verse containing a pun.

sankaras sankaras – sakshat vyaso narayano hari(h) /

tayor-vivade samprapte kimkara(h) kimkaromyham //

Vyasa appeared in his real form and gave his approval for Sankara's Bhashya on Brahmasutras. The Acharya was sixteen years old by then. Learning that his mother was on her death bed, Sankara rushed back to Kaladi and sang the Govindashtaka as Aryamba was dying. After performing the obsequies he recommenced his march. Before that he composed the Matr-panchakam in five lovely verses glorifying mother — any mother for that matter.

The Acharya rushed to the banks of Narmada to be beside his guru Govinda Bhagavatpada who was at the last stage of his life. After making a trip to Prayaga (at Triveni-sangama) he met a vociferous Mimamsaka, Kumarila Bhatta

and defeated him by his philosophical discourse. Kumarila committed self-immolation by staying inside a heap of burning husk (tushagni). Another Mimamsaka by name Mandana Misra was engaged in a debate by the Acharya with Sarasavani, Mandana's wife acting as arbiter. The vanquished Mandana became a disciple of Sankara assuming the name of Suresvaracharya. Sankaracharya wrote as many as sixteen Bhashyas, several Prakarana granthas (Manuals on philosophical topics) and numerous stotras.

The Acharya travelled all over the country of Bharata. While wandering in the Andhradesa, the Acharya was about to be slain by a fierce Kapalika. Padmapada, the Acharya's disciple who was also a Narasimha Upasaka got possessed of Narasimha and destroyed the kapalika. The Acharya visited Ahobilam, Tirupati, Sringeri and Kanchi. Kashmir the seat of great learning then, was also visited by him.

In South India the Acharya visited Chidambaram, Thirukkadaiyur, Thiruvenkadu, Thiruvidaïmarudur (Madhyarjuna), Thiruvanaikkaval, Thiruvannamalai, Srirangam, Madurai, Rameswaram, Thiruchendur, Thiruvananthapuram, Mookambika Kshetra (near Mangalore), Thiruvottiur and Mangadu. Pandarpur in Maharashtra and Guruvayur in Kerala are also considered to be part of his itinerary.

After establishing Mutts in Dwaraka, Puri, Sringeri and Joshimutt on the Himalayas, Sankaracharya seems to have settled at Kanchi. Even though claims are made that the

Acharya attained mukti at Kedarnath, a large volume of literature on Sankaracharya accept Kanchi as the final resort of Sankaracharya. The Acharya attained videhamukti in the year 820 A.D. The traditional accounts mention the year of his videhamukti as 477 B.C.

The following verse sums up the life-journey of Sankaracharya.

ashtavarshe caturvedi dvadase sarva sastravit/

shodase krtavan bhashyam dvairimse muni(h) abhyagat//

The Works of Sankaracharya

Only the important works of Sankaracharya are noted here and these works indicate the range of the Acharya's wisdom.

1. *Bhashya* on the Brahma - sutras

2. *Bhashya* on the principal Upanishads

(Is'a, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Aitareya, Taittiriya, Chandogya, Brhadaranyaka, Nrsimhapurvatapini and Svetasvatara Upanishads.)

3. *Bhashya* on the Bhagavad Gita

4. *Bhashya* on the Vishnu sahasranama

5. *Sanatsujitiya bhashya*.

6. *Vivekacudamani*

7. *Upadesasahasri*

8. Atmabodha.

9. Stotras like the *Saundaryalahari*, *Anandalahari*, *Padadikesanta-varnana* of *Vishnu* and *Siva*, *Lakshminarasimha Karavalambastotra*, *Bhajagovindam* and *Kanakadharastava*.

More than a hundred works have been listed by well informed writers of Sankara's biography. It is no wonder that Sankaracharya occupies a place of prominence in the panorama of Indian Philosophy.

Philosophy of Sri Sankara

Sri Sankara's Philosophy is called Advaita or non-dualistic. '*Brahma satyam - Jagat mithya*' is the key slogan in this system. Brahman alone is real and the Universe with all its manifestations is unreal. One who sees a rope in a zig-zag manner in a dim-lit area, mistakes it for a snake. Here rope is real and the snake is unreal. This mistaken notion arises on account of his poor eyesight. Once light falls in that area, he realises that he has imagined a snake in the rope. The mistaken notion is maya or avidya, non-knowledge or nescience. The light that dispels his mistaken notion is tattvajnana or true knowledge. The Universe appearing as real like the snake in the rope is the result of Vivarta (a cognition of change while the basic reality still remains) and therefore the Advaita system is based on Vivartavada as opposed to Parinamavada (transformation of basic reality) of Visishtadvaita. Maya according to Sankara means prakriti and it possesses twin powers - the power to conceal Brahman (*avarana sakti*) and the power to manifest

as prakriti (*vikshepa sakti*). The unreal nature of the world is the result of avarana sakti attributed to maya. As a result Brahman is seen as the material world. With the dawn of right knowledge avidya is destroyed and as a natural corollary both the avarana and vikshepa saktis causing the phenomenal universe disappear. Other philosophers hold that maya has Vikshepa sakti only and prakriti will remain even after the dawn of true knowledge.

What is Brahman?

To describe Brahman there must be a second entity (Vyakti) apart from Brahman. This position is sought to be avoided by stating that Brahman is nirguna (attributeless), nishkriya (without activity) niravayava (without parts), nirupadhika (unconditioned) and nirvisesha (without any distinguishing element) Even the terms sat, cit and ananda do not describe Brahman but they indicate 'pure being' 'pure consciousness' and 'pure bliss.' Maya or avidya too has no locus. It is anirvacaniya and is not separate from Brahman.

That entity which identifies itself with the gross body (sthula sarira made up of the five elements after Pancikarana) is the reflection of Brahman and is called Jiva. By nature it thinks itself to be separate from Isvara (*sthulasarirabhimani Jivanamakam brahmapratibimbam bhavati sa eve jiva(h) prakrtya svasmat isvaram bhinnatvena janatill* Tatvabodha of Sankara). The atma conditioned by the limiting adjunct called Avidya is called Jiva. The Self conditioned by the adjunct Maya is known as Isvara. Brahman reflected in the sthula sarira is called Jiva

Whereas the same Brahman reflected in Maya is Isvara. Jiva is under the spell of Maya which is wielded by Isvara. So long as the notion that Jiva and Isvara are different, on account of the difference in the limiting factors (upadhi), remain there is no relief from the cycle of births and deaths (samsara). (*evam upadhibhedat jiveasvara-bhedadshti(h) yavat paryantam tishthati tavat paryantam janma maranadirupa-samsaro na nivartate—Tatvabodha*). That is the reason why the knowledge of the difference between Jiva and Isvara should not be entertained. However there is no defect if one should find non-difference between Jiva and Isvara based on their being pure consciousness (*evam ca Jivesvarayoh caitanyarupena abhede bhadakabhava(h)*). The school of Sankara accepts the stage of a soul before liberation as Jivanmukta. Whoever, through scriptures and teachings of a right guru, finds Brahman in all beings, he is considered a Jivanmukta. The knower of the Self, having crossed samsara realises the Supreme Bliss here itself. Once the mortal body is cast off, such an 'atmavid' becomes Brahman.

To pursue the above contention the Advaitins rely on *Srutivakyas* that speak of non-difference between Jiva and Brahman. These *srutivakyas* are *Abheda srutis*. The Vedas however contain passages that stress difference (*Bheda - srutis*), non-difference (*Abhedasrutis*) apart from passages that reconcile the difference and non-difference (*Ghatakasrutis*). Sankara with his monistic view holds that the *bhedasrutis* have no practical (*paramarthika*) value. So he concentrates on *abhedasrutis* giving them primacy (*mukhyavritti*). For the other *srutis* he applies secondary

value (*lakshana* or *gauna vritti*). Another noteworthy feature is: Sankara did not accept that the *Uttaramimamsa* or *Jnanakanda* is a continuation of the *Purvamimamsa* or *Karmakanda*. The term '*atha*' in the first aphorism of the *Brahmasutra* '*athato brahma-jijnasa*' according to advaitic interpretation means 'after the attainment of the four-fold *sadhana*'. Ramanuja takes '*atha*' in the sense of 'after realizing the meagre and unstable reward of performing the *Karmas*'. He does not altogether reject *Purvamimamsa* outright but interprets the *Karmas* enjoined there as a form of worship of the supreme Lord.

Is Brahman God with a form?

When Brahman is said to be '*nirguna*', to posit Brahman as a god with a form and attributes is totally against the tenets of Advaita. But God in some form or other is still accepted and worshipped by the followers of the Advaita school. This comes under karma or actions that disciplines and purifies the soul. They are aids to the rising of *tattvajnana*. Once this knowledge is attained through the four-fold discipline (*Sadhana Catushtaya*) viz., *Nityanitya-vastu-viveka*, *Samadamadisadhana-sampat*, *Ihamutra-phala-bhogaviraga* and *Mumukshutva*, the difference between the *Paramarthika Brahman* (Brahman as absolute reality) and *Vyavaharika Brahman* (Brahman in its practical and mundane form) is obliterated and the *sampatti* or oneness with Brahman is attained. The *Mahavakya* '*Tat tvam asi*' points to this oneness. Even though there are three levels of Truth in the Advaita system- *Paramarthika* (attributable to Brahman only), *Vyavaharika* (attributable to the phenomenal Universe) and *Pratibhasika* (attributable to

the illusions that an individual experiences)—a personal God according to Advaita cannot belong to the first category nor to the third category. Even though Advaita (and every other system for that matter) believes that liberation is only through knowledge (*jnanan-mokshah*) Knowledge can be attained only by a uni-directional mind. So to fix the mind on a certain peg, a personal god is needed even according to the Advaita School. The Dharmasastras, Smritis, Puranas, Itihasas and similar texts are needed to condition the mind. In this context it is worth bearing in mind that denoting Advaitins alone as Smartas is a misnomer as all those who believe in the Vedic authority and follow the Vedic injunctions are Smartas, since Vedic injunctions are to be interpreted in the light of Dharmasastras, Smritis etc. In conclusion it has to be asserted that subscribing to the view that an all-powerful God, full of mercy, attended by auspicious qualities and propitiated by prayers is not only a necessity but also the central theme of all the religious texts.

Sankara's view on the supremacy of Vishnu

If Brahman according to Sankara is attributeless and formless, such a view could not have been his personal choice. It was a historical necessity. In the face of agnostic Carvakas and atheistic Buddhists and Jains, a God - name does not matter-has to be established in some form. It is natural for anyone to answer his opponent seemingly supporting him. The idea that there is one all-powerful Supreme Power manifesting Itself, though illusorily, as the Universe, is a signal contribution of Sankara. This is really a great achievement when we take into consideration the

frenzied sweep of Jainism and Buddhism all over India through royal patronage. Sankara routed these systems, but it is also a fact that they themselves perished slowly on account of their inner contradictions and later accretions.

The supremacy of Vishnu— Narayana seems to be uppermost in the mind of Sankara when we have a close look at his commentaries and stotras. First let us have a look at Bhajagovinda stotra. The original title of this stotra is Mohamudgara-Hammer unto delusion. By 'delusion' Sankara means the mistaken notion of '*anatma*' as '*atma*' and taking the evanescent pleasures of the world as ultimate joy. This poem is both simple in style yet grandiose in the inculcation of true knowledge. The following verse exposes the mind of Sankara quite well.

Bhagavad-gita kincid - adhita, ganga-jala-lava kanika pita/

Sakrdapi yena Murari samarca kriyate tasya yamena na carcal/

A little part of Bhagavad Gita studied, a droplet of Ganges water drunk, Lord Vishnu or Murari worshipped just once, by him no argument needs to be made with the god of death. What Sankara means here is that one should attain knowledge through Bhagavad gita, cleanse his body by the Ganges water and try to win the grace of Lord Narayana by worshipping Him. The three syllabled term *Go-vin-da* is considered to grant whatever wished for, when chanted. It was her faithful utterance of this word that saved Draupadi from disgrace in the open assembly.

We come across an account of Sankara invoking Lord Narasimha at a time when he, animating the body of a king, was placed on a pyre. As the fire was engulfing the body, Sankara invoked Lakshminarasimha to save him and this invocation came to be known as *Lakshminarasimha Karavalamba stotram*. On another occasion Padmapada, a disciple of Sankara and also a upasaka of Narasimha got possessed by this fierce God and tore to pieces a Kapalika who approached Sankara with an intention to kill the Acarya. Myriad stotras on Vishnu are having the signature of Sankara but the stotras on other Gods and Goddesses of Hindu pantheon out-number them. So we have to turn to other important sources. Pancaratra is a text accepted as a valid authority by the Visishtadvaitins. But Sankara seems to doubt its validity on one ground that Supreme Lord Vasudeva dividing Himself into four Vyuha forms of *Vasudeva Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha* as enunciated in Pancaratra is against logic. The emanation of Vyuha forms is tantamount to effect arising from a cause. The effect being birth, those that are born are to be termed as jivas. One cannot also accept all the four Vyuhas as Isvaras which position will cause a multiplicity of Isvaras. On either count Pancaratra falls down from the status of a valid authority according to Sankara. This is the gist of Sankara's view in the *Utpattayasambhavadhikarana* (II. 2.42-45) of the Brahmasutra. Ramanuja finds no inconsistency in the above context as incarnations of the Supreme Lord are not to be treated as births in the worldly sense. Even Sankara is not unsympathetic to the whole of Pancaratra and he endorses Pancaratra view that Lord Narayana should be worshipped with a single-pointed devotion.

In his commentary on the Bhagavad gita, Sankara makes an interesting comment in his Introduction. One should not forget in this context that Bhagavad Gita has been accepted as one of the Prasthanas granthas not only because of its intrinsic philosophical content but also because it was revealed by Sri Krishna, an avatara of Sriman Narayana. If the avatara is taken as an illusion then the validity of Bhagavad Gita is itself in grave doubt. Why doubt? People have every reason to reject it. But Sankara having been too familiar with the term Maya which is the pivot of his Monistic philosophy and which was always handled by him in the sense of illusion takes the avatara of Krishna also as an illusion. We can not say that he was not aware of the other meaning of Maya viz., (divine) knowledge. He comments *adharma na abhibhuyamane dharma, pravardhamane ca adharme jagata(h) sthitim paripalayishu (h) sa adikarta narayanakhyo vishnu(h)..... devakyam vasudevad amsena krshna(h) kila sambabhuva/..... Bhagavan..... svayameva dehavaniva jata iva ca lokanugraham kurvan lakshyate.* (Introduction to the *Bhagavad-gita-bhashya* of Sankara). The passage means that the Lord's incarnation as one possessing a human body is a semblance. The very fact that Sankara considered Bhagavad Gita as a Revelation and one of the Prasthanas runs counter to the above superficial meaning. In accordance with His free will, the Supreme Lord descends into this world in a form chosen by Him, to lift the people stuck up in the morass of worldly existence.

While commenting on sloka 19 of chapter VII Sankara convincingly uses the term 'Narayana' as a substitute for

'Vasudeva' (*vasudeva(h) sarvam iti/ya evam sarvatmanam mam narayanam pratipadyate, sa mahatma; na tatsama(h) anya(h) asti, adhiko va*). Similarly while commenting on sloka 8 of chapter X, Sankara unequivocally underlines the declaration of the Lord thus: "*aham param brahma vasudevakhyam sarvasya jagata(h) prabhava(h) utpatti(h). matta-eva sthiti-nasa-kriya - phalopabhogalakshanam vikriyarupam sarvam jagat pravartate*". The compulsions of propounding a well founded philosophy have weighed heavily on Sankara to take Krishna's teachings as valid pramana! Earlier (sl.6.ch.X) while interpreting '*madbhava(h)*' Sankara states '*madgatabhavana(h) vaishnavena samarthyena upeta(h)*' meaning "endowed with the power of being devoted to Vishnu" Ramanuja interprets this phrase as 'those who follow my (Krishna's) will'. While concluding his comments on the last verse of Chapter XII, Sankara's concept of Supreme God-head is made crystal clear.....*bhagavata(h) Vishno(h) paramesvarasya ativa priya(h) bhavati/ tasmad idam dharmyamrutam mumukshuna yatnata(h) anushttheyam Vishno (h) param dhama jigamishuna - iti vakyartha (h)/*. Sankara is more eloquent than Ramanuja in stressing the identity of the Supreme God-head viz., Vishnu and the reward that one hankering after salvation will reach viz., the supreme abode of Vishnu.

Sankara grieves for those who worship gods other than Narayana as they derive little or no benefit. In his comments on Bhagavad Gita sloka 23, Chapt.VII, he laments saying that those with feeble knowledge worship all (self-proclaiming) gods and come to grief. The rigours of worship

being the same they do not resort to me (Sri Krishna referring to Himself) for obtaining unlimited reward. What a pitiable position they are in! (*antavat - vinasī tu phalam tesham tad bhavati alpamedhasam alpaprajñanam/ devan yajante iti devayajā(h) te devan yanti/ madbhakta(h) yanti mamapi/ evam samanepi ayase mam eva na pratipadyante anantaphalaya; aho khalu kashtataram vartate, ity anukrośam darsayati bhagavan/*)

Similarly Sankara's pithy commentary on Bh.G.IX. 23-25 dispells all doubts regarding his well-analysed concept of supremacy of Narayana among a host of gods of the Hindu pantheon.

"If indeed all other gods are (none other than) yourself, it means that the devotees of those gods are only worshipping you. Yes, it is true in this sense Oh! Arjuna, those devoted to other gods worshipping them with faith do worship me only but that is with ignorance (*avidhi = ajñanam*). Why ignorance? They perform sacrifices recommended by Srutis and Smrtis for which I am the controller and enjoyer. When they resort to sacrifices without understanding the above truth, they do not understand me in essence. By performing sacrifices with such ignorance they slide from realising their intended sacrificial reward. But they do get some reward having worshipped other gods though out of ignorance. Those that worship gods reach the world of (respective) gods. Those who worship manes reach the world of manes. Those who worship the bhutaganas reach the bhutas like Vinayaka, Matrugana, Caturbhagini etc., Those Vaishnavas who worship me (Krishna) reach me only.

Even though the effort put in is equal, people out of ignorance do not worship me and thus enjoy minimal reward". One cannot argue more effectively than in this manner for the efficacy of Vishnu-worship as a means of Salvation.

If we turn our attention to Sankara's commentary on Vishnusahasranama his Vaishnava fervour is quite evident albeit a wishy-washy introduction. The commentary commences with an extract from *Harivamsa* describing Siva as praising Vishnu as the Primordial Being and speaking of identity of Hari and Hara. The commentator Tarakabrahmananda Sarasvati brings out some conflict in the readings and suggests the mangala sloka as "*sahasramurte (h) purushothamasya, sahasranetraanana-pada - baho(h)/ sahasranamnam stavanam prasastam, nirucyate janmajaradisantyai ||*" The above confusion is resolved when we look at the uncompromising attitude of Sankara while commenting on the various epithets of Lord Vishnu. The term 'Sarva' (No.26) has a popular meaning of Siva. Sankara interprets this term as one who destroys all beings at the time of final destruction without hinting that Siva is the final destroyer. By 'Sarva', Sankara means only Vishnu.

The term 'Siva' occurs twice. In the first occurrence (No.27) the term is interpreted as free from the three gunas and though the term 'Siva' denotes the god Siva, only Hari is praised by that term. In the second occurrence (No.600) the same term 'Siva' is interpreted as pointing to one who purifies (the mind) through the mere utterance of His name. The term 'Sthanu' (No.28) which has a popular denotation

of Siva is interpreted by Sankara as one who is well established and ever retaining his form. The term 'Amogha' occurs twice. In the first occurrence (No.110) Lord Vishnu is described as granting rewards whenever remembered or praised and ever unfailing. In the second occurrence (No.154) Vishnu's incarnation as Vamana is referred to and Vishnu is described as one whose actions are never unfruitful or purposeless. While interpreting the last epithet 'Sarvapraharanayudha(h)' (No.1000) Sankara's comments breathe the fervour of an ardent devotee of Vishnu. Sankara comments here that anything can become a weapon in the hands of Vishnu including the finger-nails thereby implying the incarnation of Narasimha. He further remarks that the term 'Sarvapraharanayudha(h)' indicates the 'satyasankalpatva' (having a true and purposeful resolve) and 'sarvesaratva' (being the over lord of all creations)

It is worthwhile to conclude Sankara's concept of the supremacy of Vishnu by remembering the words of Narayana Bhattatiri.

*sri sankaro'pi bhagavan sakaleshu tavat
tvameva manayati yo na hi pakshapati/
tvannishthameva sa hi namasahasrakadi
vyakhyat – bhavatstuti-parasca gatim gato (a)ntell
(Narayaniyam 90-5)*

'Bhagavan Sankara who never takes sides, honours You, Narayana, as Brahman with all auspicious qualities. He has commented on all the (prasthanas) granthas as eulogising You. He also attained mukti by prasing you only in his last days'

As pointed out earlier, several times the terms Vasudeva, Narayana and Vishnu were ever in his mind and on his lips and they have fascinated him throughout his life - with the result that the successive Advaitic Acharyas are also remembering Him by signing as Narayanasmti.

SRI RAMANUJA

This land of ours, though termed Karmabhumi as mortals spend up and accumulate their karmas, is also hailed as Punyabhumi since it has been sanctioned by many saints. By spreading their teachings which are broad based on Universal Love and Devotion to God, these holy men have striven with every nerve to resurrect people bound in eternal samsara on account of their own hideous acts. The South of India has been more fortunate in having a galaxy of such saints and mystical philosophers who practised and preached an amalgam of knowledge and love.

The line of Alvars culminated with Madhura Kavi, who by his great devotion to his predecessor, Nammalvar, has established the principle of Acharya nishtha (absolute dependence on the Acharya). This was followed by a great line of Acharyas, commencing with Nathamuni. His disciple was Uyyakkondar (Pundarikasha) and he had a true disciple in Manakkal Nambi (Sriramamisra). Nathamuni's grand son by name Yamunacharya who had a princely life earlier, was brought under divine grace by Manakkal Nambi. Yamunacharya, otherwise known as Alavandar, was the Acharya of Sri Ramanuja.

At Sriperumbudur, not very far from Chennai was a

great Vedic Scholar by name Kesava Somayaji of the renowned Asuri family. His wife Kantimati was a woman of great beauty and character. Her sister married Kamalanayana Bhatta of Mazhalaimangalam, a village close to Sriperumbudur. Both these women were sisters of Periyathirumalai Nambi, a disciple of Alavandar. To Kesava Somayaji and Kantimati, was born a male child of great brilliance, an incarnation of Adishesha in the month of Chaitra and in the asterism Ardra in the year Pingala corresponding to Saka Era 939. (1017 A.D.) Periyalthirumalai Nambi, who hailed from Thirumalai Hills, conferred the name of Ilayavar on his nephew and taught him the Vedas and Sastras. At the age of sixteen Ilayavar was married to Tanjamambal, a girl of exquisite beauty.

Coming to know that an Advaitic Scholar-monk by name Yadavaprakesa, was teaching Vedanta in a village near Kanchipuram Ilayavar came under his tutelage. Govinda Bhatta, the son of Kamalanayana Bhatta and a cousin of Ilayavar (younger to him by eight years) joined him in his Vedantic studies under Yadavaprakasa. Being very much devoted to Saguna Brahma, Ilayavar used to challenge the Advaitic (Nirguna) interpretations of his teacher. One day when Ilayavar felt greatly distressed at the improper meaning of the Chandogya Upanishad passage '*tasya yatha kapyasam pundarikamevamakshini*, a (where Kapyasam, which is a comparison for the Lord's eyes, was interpreted by Yadavaprakasa as the posterior or a monkey while Ilayavar favoured the interpretation of 'luscious lotus'). Yadavaprakasa chided his disciple for his impertinence and told him sternly to leave him if he was not happy with his

teaching. Ilayalvar thereupon refrained from attending his classes. Yadavaprakasa, however identifying his disciple as a source of planned to kill Ilayalvar during a pilgrimage to the Ganges. When all of them were halfway through their journey Govinda Bhatta secretly warned Ilayalvar of the conspiracy of his guru. The shocked Ilayalvar managed to drop out from the group but lost his way. By sheer divine grace he landed near Kanchipuram. He engaged himself in the service of drawing water from the well (near the place where he was dropped by the divine couple) and carrying it for the holy ablution of Lord Varadaraja.

Yadavaprakasa and his entourage were however, upset by the sudden disappearance of Ilayalvar but all the same, continued their pilgrimage till they reached the Ganges. When Govinda Bhatta took a ritual bath in the river, a linga fell into his hand and turning a Savite, settled at Kalahasti. Yadavaprakasa, on his return from the pilgrimage, felt relieved at the safety of Ilayalvar and taking him back, continued the Vedantic lessons.

At this juncture a pair of Srivaishnavas left Kanchipuram for Srirangam and while in conversation with Alavandar (Yamuna), casually reported to him the intellectual exercises of Ilayalvar. Alavandar undertook a hurried journey to Kanchipuram to see Ilayalvar. Tirukacchi Nambi received Alavandar with full temple honours. As they were circumambulating the temple, Alavandar chanced to see Ilayalvar in the midst of young scholars accompanying Yadavaprakasa. Impressed by the charming personality of Ilayalvar. Alavandar mentally blessed him and implored Lord

Varadaraja to shower His grace in such a way that Ilayalvar would become the promoter of Visishtadvaita philosophy. As Alavandar had no time to speak to Ilayalvar, he left for Srirangam with his followers.

At Srirangam, Alavandar, getting worried about a suitable promoter of the Visishtadvaita system, addressed frantic prayers to Lord Varadaraja to fulfil his ambition. At Kanchi, Yadavaprakasa and Ilayalvar got separated over a dispute regarding the interpretation of crucial Upanishadic passages. Advised by his mother, Ilayalvar resorted to Tirukkacchi Nambi who bade him to continue the old service of carrying water from the well for divine worship.

Alavandar fell sick and learning that Ilayalvar had parted company with Yadavaprakasa despatched Periyambadi to fetch Ilayalvar to be made his (Alavandar's) successor. Soon after Periyambadi left for Kanchi to fetch Ilayalvar, Alavandar breathed his last. Periyambadi informed Tirukkacchi Nambi of his mission to Kanchi and attracted the attention of Ilayalvar by reciting the Stotratatna of Alavandar. When Ilayalvar expressed his desire to see Alavandar, Periyambadi took him to Srirangam. Seeing a large crowd on the banks of Kaveri, they enquired what it was about. On learning that it was the funeral procession of Alavandar, they felt very distressed. When Ilayalvar had darshan of the holy body of Alavandar, he was surprised to see three of his fingers bent. Ilayalvar suspected some unfulfilled ambitions in the mind of Alavandar. The assembled disciples revealed that he used to dwell upon a sense of obligation to Vyasa and Parasara, supreme attachment to

Nammalvar and a longing to write a Visishtadvaitic commentary on the Brahma Sutra. Ilayalvar made a solemn vow to fulfil all the above three unfulfilled ambitions and lo! the fingers became straight. At the end of the obsequies of Alavandar, Ilayalvar repaired to Kanchi.

Ilayalvar expressed his desire to Tirukkacchi Nambi that the latter be his teacher. Nambi declined as he was a non-Brahmin. On another occasion, Ilayalvar wished to take the remnant of what Nambi had eaten and hence invited him to his house for a feast. After his daily worship, Ilayalvar went by one road to fetch Tirukkacchi Nambi but Nambi came by another road and had a hurried meal as he was required for doing the fanning service to the Lord. Ilayalvar's wife removed the left-overs with the help of a stick, cleaned the place with cow dung and took bath. Ilayalvar returned home without finding Nambi at his mutt, and was pained at the happenings and the attitude of his wife. He appealed to Nambi to contact Lord Varadaraja and check a few thoughts crossing his mind. The Lord favoured Nambi with the following six messages.

(1) We are the supreme truth, (2) the Philosophical system is based on difference, (3) Surrender is the only means of salvation, (4) It is not necessary to think of Us (God) in the last moments of one's life, (5) Salvation is at the termination of the body, (6) Resort to Mahapurna (Periya Nambi). Ilayalvar agreed that it was exactly the same manner in which he was thinking.

At Srirangam, people encouraged Periya Nambi to go to Kanchi to make Ilayalvar assume the leadership. He

left for Kanchi with family and en route halted at Madurantakam. Ilayalvar too was on his way to meet his teacher. Both met at Madurantakam. Considering himself as an instrument of Alavandar, Periya Nambi branded Ilayalvar with the Lord's insignia (Conch and Discus) and taught the holy mantra (Dvaya). Then Periya Nambi and Ilayalvar came to Kanchi.

Periya Nambi stayed with his family in a portion of Ilayalvar's residence for six months and taught him many holy texts. One day Ilayalvar asked his wife to feed a hungry Srivaishnava at least with cold rice, but she said she had none. Upon checking he found out that his wife had uttered a lie. Naturally he expressed his displeasure at her conduct. On another day, in his absence, his wife quarrelled with the wife of Periya Nambi while drawing water from the well. Periya Nambi left for Srirangam with his family lest his stay should promote offence to a Bhagavata. Ilayalvar felt distressed at the consistently ugly conduct of his wife and sent her to her parents along with sufficient money for her maintenance. With a resolve to take to sannyasa he prayed to Lord Perarulala (Varadaraja) to confer upon him the status of sannyasi. The Lord was pleased to confer it on him and also announced through His priest a fresh name 'Ramanujamuni'. At divine command, he stayed in the mutt of Tirukkacchi Nambi. He cherished a keen desire to get his cousin Govinda Bhatta, a great scholar with much goodwill towards him back into the Srivaishnava fold and sent a messenger to his uncle Periyatirumalai Nambi for achieving this. In the meanwhile Ramanuja's nephew Mudaliyandan

(Dasarathi) and Kurattalvan (Srivatsanka Misra) chose him as their preceptor and were by his side at all times.

Yadavaprakasa's mother, who was much impressed by Ramanuja, encouraged her son, an ekandandi, to resort to Ramanuja and become a tridandi. After much deliberation, he became a tridandi sannyasi by name Govinda Jiyar and received *panchasamskara* from Ramanuja. Before he died in his ripe old age, he wrote a manual in the conduct of on Srivaishnava monks by name Yatidharamasamuccaya.

The disciples of Alavandar managed to fetch Ramanuja to Srirangam. Helped by his disciples and a Chola chieftain (Akalanka Nattalvan) Ramanuja revamped the administration of Srirangam temple and revived the Pancaratra form of worship.

News came to Ramanuja, that the Saivite Govinda, after much argument, got converted to Srivaishnavism by Periyatirumalai Nambi. Ramanuja then received special instruction from Periya Nambi who further directed him to seek the guidance of Thirukottiyur Nambi. Ramanuja had to make eighteen trips to Tirukottiyur to receive the instruction from Nambi. Finally, Nambi was pleased to instruct the holy mantra (Tirumantra) in privacy. Even though Ramanuja undertook to guard the secret mantra, out of compassion, he taught it to a group of interested men assembled on the terrace of the temple at Tirukottiyur. When pulled up by Nambi, Ramanuja replied that even though hell would be the reward to him for transgressing the words of his guru, he was pleased that a large number of Srivaishnavas would be uplifted. Nambi who was overwhelmed by the altruistic

attitude of Ramanuja embraced him, addressing him as Emberumanar (the Saviour) and on another occasion, taught him the meaning of another holy mantra (charmasloka). Ramanuja taught it to Kurattalvan who fasted at his mutt for a month in lieu of a year-long discipline. After a period of test, Mudaliyandan received the same instructions from Ramanuja. As required by Tirukottiyur Nambi, Ramanuja took lessons in Tiruvaimozhi from Tirumalai Andan. By intuition and the grace of Alavandar, Ramanuja offered fresh interpretations of Tiruvaimozhi. This angered the teacher who was, however, pacified by Tirukottiyur Nambi. Tirumalai Andan was convinced that Ramanuja must have fully imbibed the grace of Alavandar. Thus Ramanuja received instructions from five Acharyas.

Now Ramanuja wrote a *Gadayatraya* (three rhapsodies in prose) and *Nitya*, a manual on worship at home. A few attempts were made on his life as he was strict in temple administration but all these were foiled. Worried about the safety of Ramanuja, Tirukkottiyur Nambi employed Kidambi Achan as the latter's personal cook.

An arrogant scholar by name Yajnamurti engaged Ramanuja in a debate lasting seventeen days. Ramanuja, getting upset over a possible defeat, offered prayers to the Lord and, being recharged with His grace, started for the last day's debate with self-confidence. Yajnamurti understood that his opponent was replenished with divine grace and agreed to become his disciple. However, Ramanuja raised his well-knit objections to Mayavada. Yajnamurti became a tridandi sannyasi and got the name of Arulalapperumal Emberumanar and in his turn initiated many disciples into the tenets of the religion.

After despatching one of his disciples, Ananthalvan to look after the flower-garden at Tirumalai Hills, Ramanuja himself undertook a journey to the Hills to have darshan of the Lord. He got down at Tirupati where he listened to an exposition of Ramayana for one year under the feet of Thirumalai Nambi. Taking Govinda with him Ramanuja returned to Srirangam. In course of time, finding that Govinda was disinterested in the life of a householder, Ramanuja conferred on him monkhood.

After completing *Vedartha Sangraha* at Tirumalai Ramanuja left for Kashmir accompanied by Kurattalvan to study the Vritti of Bodhayana. Sufficient time was not allowed to them by the owners of the manuscript for a thorough study. But Kurattalvan had a miraculous memory power and so he got the Vritti by heart. At Srirangam, Ramanuja not only completed his commentary on the Brahma Sutras by name *Sribhashya* but also wrote other works like *Vedanta Deepa*, *Vedanta Sara*, *Vedartasangraha* and a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*, fulfilling the first ambition of Alavandar.

Thereupon Ramanuja undertook a tour of religious propaganda and on the way visited many holy places. While touring in North India, he visited Kashmir where the Goddess of Learning addressed Ramanuja as Sribhashyakara in honour of his erudite commentary and also handed over to him the idol of Hayagriva. After taking a holy dip in the Ganges, Ramanuja worshipped at many holy shrines at Puri, Srikurma, Simhachala and Ahobila. Before he returned to Srirangam, he halted at Tirumala Hills in order to silence the claims of the Saivites that the Lord of Tirumalai was Siva. Ramanuja placed in the sanctum sanctorum the Saivite

insignia, the trident and the hand-drum, as well as the Vaishnavite insignia, the Discus and the Conch and closed the doors. Next morning, when the doors were opened, the Lord was found wearing the Vaishnavite insignia. He then returned to Srirangam.

By the grace of Lord Ranganatha, Andal the wife of Kurattalvan delivered twin boys and Ramanuja named them Parasara and Vyasa, thereby fulfilling the second ambition of Alavandar. Admiring the interpretation of the hymns of Divyaprabandha by Thirukkurukai Piran Pillan (Kurukesa), Ramanuja bade him to write a Tamil Commentary, on Nammalvar's Thiruvaimozhi and thus fulfilled the third ambition of Alavandar. This commentary signalled the growth of commentry literature.

As Ramanuja was thus nourishing Srivaishnavism through his conduct and discourses, the Chola ruler, Kulothunga I who was a Saivite bigot, summoned Ramanuja to his court to approve of his faith. Suspecting some foul play Kurattalvan wore the saffron robes of Ramanuja and went to the court accompanied by Periya Nambi. Ramanuja wearing the white dress of Kurattalvan escaped from Srirangam along with a few disciples. Staying in a village for a few days Ramanuja secured the saffron robes and tridanda. From there he went to Salagrama, where Veduga Nambi joined the group of his disciples.

Responding to a dream, Ramanuja accompanied by Vishnuvardhana went in search of the idol of Thirunarayana sunk in the earth on Yadugiri, and recovering the idol installed it in the temple with the help of the ruler. He also retrieved

the processional idol (Sampatkumara) from the hold of a devout Muslim Princess at Delhi and after installation of the idol arranged for the usual festivals. Fifty-two of his disciples were assigned various duties there and the place was named as Thirunarayanapuram. After this he vanquished a number of Buddhists in a debate and settled in Thirunarayanapuram for twelve years, giving discourses on Srihashya.

At this time a Srivaishnava from Srirangam came to him and informed him that when the Chola bigot insisted that Kurattalvan give his approval for the supremacy of Siva, he had refused. Periya Nambiu had also established the supremacy of Narayana. The angry ruler had ordered his men to pluck their eyes. Kurattalvan plucked his own eyes, but was happy that he could make such a sacrifice for the sake of his faith. Periya Nambi, who got his eyes plucked, had died. Some Srivaishnavas had cremated Periya Nambi and secretly carried Kurattalvan to Srirangam. Ramanuja felt much aggrieved at the gruesome incidents but subsequently he felt relieved at the demise of the cruel ruler. Before leaving Thirunarayanapuram, he permitted his devotees to sculpt his idol and worship it.

With great anxiety Ramanuja hurried to Srirangam to see Kurattalvan, wept over the loss of his eyes and attributed all the sufferings to himself. The people there expressed happiness on seeing Ramanuja back in their midst. Later, learning that the idol of Govindaraja was thrown into the sea, he rushed to Chidambaram, installed Govindaraja and restored order in the temple. He then came back to Srirangam and spent his time in Vedantic discourses.

One day Ramanuja persuaded Kurattalvan to compose a stotra addressed to Sri Varadaraja with a view to get back his eyesight. But Kurattalvan addressed Varadarajastava to the Lord to confer on him divine vision, to see Him without let or hindrance.

Kurattalvan prayed to Lord Namperumal to end his mortal body and take him to His abode. And in a few days he breathed his last after entrusting his two sons to the care of Ramanuja. The elder son Parasara Bhattar, received proper education from Ramanuja and occupied the pontifical seat after him. At the request of Mudaliyandan, an idol of Ramanuja which the Acharya not only approved of but also, embraced so that a part of his power may be transferred to it. This was then installed at Sriperumbudur by Mudaliyandan.

Sri Ramanuja had a large number of disciples comprising sannyasins, Brahmins and Non-Brahmins, and he nominated seventyfour erudite disciples of his to carry on the Srivaishnava learning and tradition. The successors of these seventyfour Preceptors are even today continuing the mission which Ramanuja has started nearly a thousand years ago. Thus Ramanuja Darsana is not only a living faith catering to the spiritual needs of all, irrespective of the distinction based on caste or community, it gave a fillip to the Bhakti cult which spread throughout the country.

Finding that his end was drawing near, Ramanuja sent for Mudaliyandan and appealed to Lord Ranganatha to grant 'moksha' without delay.

Ramanuja advised Parasara Bhattar to win over one Vedanti (alias Madhavacharya), a learned Advaitin, by

engaging him in a debate. Parasara Bhattar did likewise after the days of his mentor. Vedanti came to be known as Nanjiyar and continued the commentary tradition.

In his last days Ramanuja expressed great concern for the proper maintenance of the temple of Lord Ranganatha and advised Bhattar to look after the temple and promote the Srivaishnava Sampradaya. He gave the following advice to the assembled Srivaishnavas: *"One who has surrendered himself to the Lord need not worry about the soul, which is dependent on the Lord, as well as about his body which is dependent on Karma. But a prapanna should get himself involved in the service of the Lord and His devotees. He must devise his conduct with regard to the three types of people, such as the Srivaishnavas who are the favourable, those who hate the Lord who are the non - favourable and the mundane the people who are neither. A prapanna should feel delighted in the company of the Favourable. He should teach the knowledge of the soul if people of other categories become amenable to him. Otherwise, he should still be merciful to them. If one ignores Srivaishnavas on the basis of wealth and desire, the Lord would hate him as the king would hate those who insult the prince in the royal court. If one favours the non-favourable on the above basis, the Lord would hate him like a king would hate his queen when she begs from inferior men. If one favours the mundane people who are neither favourable nor non-favourable, the Lord would still ignore him, thinking that his knowledge is not effective as in the case of one who is not able to distinguish between a diamond and a cowrie."* He further suggested to his disciples to spend their time in pursuing one of the following.

1. Reading and causing to read Sribhashya. failing which
2. Reciting and causing to recite Divya Prabhanda, failing which
3. Doing service to God in places favoured by the Lord, failing which
4. Residing at Thirunarayanapuram, failing which
5. Studying Dvaya Mantra with meaning, failing which
6. Living under the affectionate care of one who is devoted to Sriman Narayana:

After thus preparing all his disciples for his final journey towards the Supreme Lord, Ramanuja ended the play of his one hundred and twenty years of life in the month of Maga and on the tenth day of bright fortnight associated with his birth star Ardra. The years of his birth and death are computed in accordance with the chronograms 'Dirlabdha' (Saka 939) and Dharmo Nashtaha (Saka 1059). The year of death corresponds to 1137 A.D.

His idols installed at Thirunarayanapuram, Sriperumbudur and Srirangam attract a large number of devotees. Almost all the Vishnu temples have a shrine dedicated to Ramanuja.

Philosophy of Ramanuja

It should be understood that Ramanuja was not the progenitor of a new system of Philosophy, Visishtadvaita after repudiating earlier systems, chief among them being Advaita.

Even though Visishtadvaita is also a kind of Advaita, it differs drastically from it. Primarily Ramanuja holds the view that the Universe is as much real as Brahman and that Brahman is a personal god who is none other than Narayana.

'*Dvita*' means the state of being two entities. The negation of such a state (*dvita na bhavati*) is Advaitam. The right interpretation of Visishtadvaita is Visishtasya Advaitam, the oneness of Brahman qualified by or with attributes viz. cit (Sentient) and acit (non-sentient).

There was a continuous line of teachers advocating Visishtadvaita darsana. Bodhayana (Vrittikara), also known as Upavarsha. Tanka (Brahmanandi), Dramidacharya, Guhadeva, Kabardhi and Bhaaruci are some of the earlier Acharyas whose complete writings are not available now. Some extracts from Bodhayana's *vritti* and Dramidacharya's *bhashya* are handled by Sankara, Yamuna and Ramanuja. Alvar's hymns contain the quintessence of this philosophy. Yamunacharya gives an analytical treatment of this Darsana in his Siddhitraya and this is probably the earliest documentation of the tenets of the Darsana. Maharishi Bodhayana's gloss on Brahmasutras was followed by condensed versions by the scholars who came after Bodhayana. (This Bodhayana must be different from Bhodayana, the author of Dharmasutra). Ramanuja affirms in the beginning of Sribhashya that he is only elaborating what was said by these predecessors. The impact of these acharyas must have been felt in deep South. Otherwise Ramanuja would not have subscribed to the concept of *Saguna Brahman*. The idea of *Saguna Brahman* handled

by the Alvares in their hymns was also there before him. Ramanuja's breaking away from his teacher Yadavaprakasa must be attributed to Ramanuja's conviction that the *Nirguna Brahman* of Sankara has no logic in it.

Ramanuja has nowhere stated that his system be known as Visishtadvaita. Since he is strongly in favour of *Visisht Brahman* both in the micro - cosmic and macro - cosmic states his system came to be known as Visishtadvaita. The system is also popularly known as Srivaishnavism as Vishnu is considered inseparable from Sri (Goddess Lakshmi).

PRAMANAS (Proofs of Knowledge)

Ramanuja Sampradaya accepts only three *Pramanas* - Perception (*Pratyaksha*), Inference (*Anumaana*) and Verbal testimony (*Sabda*). When *Pratyaksha* and *Anumaana* fail to yield correct knowledge, *Sabda* alone has to be taken as the authority.

Perception is two-fold. Determinate (*Savikalpaka* or *Savishesha*) and Indeterminate (*Nirvikalpaka* or *Nirvishesha*) and both forms of cognition is aided by attributes. All knowledge, therefore is true and based on quality. With regard to *anumaana* or inference the logicians require five limbs for a syllogism, viz. thesis (*pratijnaa*), reason (*hetu*), example (*udaharana*) application (*upanaya*) and conclusion (*nigamana*). For Visishtadvaitins the thesis can be substantiated by example and application. The number of limbs depends on the intelligence of the person. For sharp minds two will do. That which is not spoken by untrustworthy

person is authoritative. Vedas, Itihasas, Puranas, Agamas, Dharmasastras and other treatises pertaining to art form, and medicine and the utterances of Alvars (commentaries like Sribhashya is added after the advent of Ramanuja) are all authoritative. Any test of the above kind which does not militate against the main tenets of Visishtadvaita is authoritative. The crux of the verbal testimony is all expressions finally connote Srīman Narayana. [*Sarve sabdaa(h) paramatma paryantha bodhaka(h)*].

The Itihasas and Puranas are supplementing and complementing the Upanishadic (vedic) texts. These however, not unitive in their approach. Some passages stress on the absolute difference between Brahman and Jagat, some on the non-difference between them, while some others accommodate both difference and non-difference. These passages are known as *Bheda-sruti-s*, *Abheda-srutis* and *Ghataka srutis* respectively. While the Advaitins concentrate on *Abheda srutis*, the Dvaitins give importance to *Bheda srutis*. Ramanuja without discarding any one of them reconciles *bheda* and *abheda* with the help of *Ghataka srutis*. When Cit (sentient), acit (non-sentient) and Isvara (God) are taken as mutually exclusive we see the difference. When we take them as mutually inclusive through a concentric arrangement we see the non-difference. This is akin to a look at the parts of a whole. When we emphasize on parts there is difference. When we look at the whole, the parts lose their individuality. Humans have no right to highlight certain parts and underplay certain other parts of Sruti Texts. Thus Ramanuja's concept is *Visishtasya advaitam* (one entity possessing attributes).

To substantiate the above concept of unity in diversity Ramanuja accepts Body-Soul relationship (*Sarira-sariri bhava*) between Jagat and Brahman as the only postulate which can accommodate the different types of Srutis. While there are several other features like the blemishless divine form of the Lord, His being the antithesis of all inauspicious qualities, His all mercifulness, etc. why should a place of prominence be given to the relationship of Body and Soul? The answer is that only by accepting this relationship the oneness of Brahman despite the plurality of the phenomenal world can be substantiated. Next question is - did Ramanuja invent such a postulate? No. He follows the *intention* of the author of Brahmasutras unlike other commentators.

In the Vakyanyadhikarana (I.4-6) of Brahmasutra there arises a necessity to define the term 'Atma' in the passage 'Atmaa vaa arey drashtavyat(h)'....." (Brihadaranyaka - VI.5.6). The doubt is whether 'Atma' here means Individual Soul or Paramatma. Even though contextually the term 'Atma' indicates Paramatma, the reason behind such an exigesis should be investigated. Three sutras in the above *adhikarana* establish the identity of Paramatma and Jivatma in three different ways - through cause and effect (Asmarathya School), through the identity that is attained after salvation. (Audulomi School) and through the indwelling of Paramatma in Jivatma indicating body-soul relationship (Kaasakritsna School). Since the author of the Sutras has not stated a fourth alternative the last position should be taken as his conclusive view. Ramanuja takes it so and builds up his philosophy based on *Sarira-sariri bhava*, which is

the basic for *apruthaksiddhi* or the inseparability of Matter and Self from God.

The fundamentals of Ramanuja's philosophy are briefly explained now:

Matter (*Prakriti*) is of two kinds - Substance (*dravya*) and non-substance (*adravya*) (This view is contrary to Naiyayika's, that matter is of seven categories. There is no place for any kind of Abhava in Visishtadvaita system)

Non-substance (*adravya*)

Non-substance is that which lacks conjunction with one another. It is of ten categories. Sattva (goodness), Rajas (passion) Tamas (ignorance), Sabda (sound), Sparsa (touch) Rupa (colour), Rasa (taste), Gandha (smell), Samyoga (contact) and Sakti (potency). Sattva is of two kinds - Suddhasattva which pertains to Isvara and Nityavibhuti, and Misrasattva which is found mixed with Rajas and Tamas belongs to the created world. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas pertain to Matter and Selves (Individual Souls). Sabda, Sparsa, Rupa, Rasa and Gandha are the qualities of the five elements effected by Matter. Through *Panchikarana* (a special process of mixing) all the qualities of all elements abide in all elements but due to the preponderance of a particular quality in each element, that quality is spoken of as the element's attribute. Contact and potency are found in all the six substances (*Dravyas*). The quality Sattva is the cause of correct knowledge and happiness and confers liberation to a Sattvic person. The quality Rajas is the cause of attachment to work (Karma),

suffering etc. and confers heaven. The quality Tamas is the cause of ignorance and inertia and leads one to hell.

Substance (*Dravya*)

The substance which is six-fold falls under two categories - Jada (material) and Ajada (non-material). *Prakriti* (Matter) and *Kaala* (time) belong to *Jada* category". *Prakriti* is having the nature of twentyfour *thattvas*. It is eternal and is denoted by terms as *akshara*, *avidya*, *maya* and *avyakta* (in unmanifest state). *Prakriti* with all its twentyfour categories are the objects, the means and abode of enjoyment for *Isvara* as well as *Jivas*. The countless *andas* which are included in the fourteen worlds are the abodes.

Kaala (Time) is free from the triple qualities (*sattva*, *rajas* and *Tamas*) is eternal and all pervasive. By limiting factors it is divided into past, present and future. Time becomes an instrument for the Lord's cosmic sport and the Lord is dependent on time. But in His eternal abode even though Time exists, He functions independently. The above two categories are bereft of pure *sattva*.

Ajada (*non-material*)

Suddhasattva, *Dharmabhutajnana*, *Jiva* and *Isvara* which have the quality of self-luminosity belong to *Ajada* category.

Nityavibhuti:

Nityavibhuti (the Eternal Abode variously called *Vaikunta*, *Aparaajitaa*, *Amruta*, *Tripadvibhuti*, *Amoda* etc.) as opposed to *Lilavibhuti* (created, sustained and destroyed

by the Lord for His sport) is of *Suddhasattva* which is different from the three gunas. The divine body of the Lord is of non-matter (*aprakruta*) in all his five forms (viz., Para, Vyuha, Vaibhava, etc.) having many auspicious qualities among which six viz. Jnana, Sakti, Bala, Aisvarya, Virya and Tejas are manifest. Hence He is called Bhagavan (Bhaga means the above six qualities).

Dharmabhutajnana: The concept of *Dharmabhutajnana* (attributive consciousness) is unique in this system. Consciousness is not an entity (as Samvrid) by itself, but it is a quality like the light to a lamp. It illumines itself and illumines others. Similarly attributive consciousness knows itself and makes others known. Like a substance it has contraction and expansion. Through sense organs, it comprehends the external objects. The various forms of knowledge are the various modes of this attributive consciousness. *Bhakti* and *Prapatti* are also the forms of consciousness. *Karma* and *Jnana* become fruitful through Bhakti only, which is the continued remembrance of God like the uninterrupted flow of oil. *Bhaktirupaapannajnaanam* (Knowledge attained through Bhakti) is the means to liberation. Bhakti is based on the love for God (Narayana). *Prapatti* or *Saranagati* which is practised through the grace of the preceptor is also love-based and knowledge-motivated. Saranagati is an effective means of winning the grace of God (Narayana). "*Tasya ca Vasikaranam taccharanaagatireva*" (B.S.I.4-1) is the declaration by Ramanuja. For practising Prapatti there is no pre-condition excepting absolute faith in the saviour and destruction of

ego. This is stressed in the Bhagavad Gita (XVIII.66). Bhakti (Love aided by Karma and Jnana), Parabhakti (Knowledge in the form of desire to visualise the Lord), Parajnana (a temporary visualization of the Lord through Parabhakti) and Paramabhakti (not being able to get separated from the Lord and a deep involvement in the God-experience) are the various stages of Bhakti in the order of ascendance.

Jiva: Jiva or Individual Soul is characterised by self - luminosity, consciousness, being 'atma' (in relation to the body) and Will. Isvara also has all these but the soul is atomic in size and yet sentient. It is by nature dependent on and supported by Isvara. It is different from body, organs, mind etc. It is eternal and different in each body. Souls are many and identical.

The souls are broadly classified as bonded, liberated and eternally stationed in Vaikuntha. The bonded souls caught in the wheel of samsara resort to liberation, with the help of sastraic knowledge which prescribes Bhakti and Prapatti. While Bhakti is meant for those with certain pre-qualifications, Prapatti which is more potent can be adopted by all irrespective of caste, creed and sex and it is practised but once in the life-time. Still everyone should practise the duties pertaining to his *varna* and *asrama* as enjoined by the Lord, without expecting any reward. A true *Prapanna* with a sense of resignation reaches *Vaikuntha* through the path of light (*archiradimarga*) attains an equal status with Paramátma (Sriman Narayana) without having cosmic functions.

Isvara: Isvara is Sriman Narayana who is the controller, master and sustainer of all, who bestows all fruits (including moksha) who is the sole cause of all effects and who has everything as His body. He is at once the material cause, the efficient cause and the instrumental cause for the Universe. The term Parabrahman applies to Narayana only, directly as well as by deduction. His main attributes are presence of all auspicious qualities and absence of all inauspicious qualities and being the inseparable Lord of Sri. His beautiful divine form is of non-matter (*aprakruta*), His essential nature is determined by Truth, consciousness, bliss, purity, etc. which shine as knowledge, power, etc. Omniscience, Omnipotence, etc. are used in creation. Love, easy miscibility, accessibility are useful for offering refuge to His devotees. Compassion, ability, etc. are useful for protecting the good. As Brahma He creates, as Vishnu He sustains and as Rudra He annihilates the Universe. He is all - pervasive (*Vibhu*) and has the Universe as His body.

Sriman Narayana has five forms - *Para* (in *Vaikuntha*) *Vyuha* (during creation) *Vibhava* (as incarnations) *Archa*, (in the form of icons) and *Antaryami* (dwelling inside all things). For creating the Universe He takes the forms of *Vasudeva*, *Sankarshana*, *Pradyumna* and *Aniruddha*. The ten main incarnations (there are multiple incarnations) constitute the *vibhava* form. *Archa* is the iconic form which attains *aprakruta* (non-matter) status once the icon is consecrated and enshrined in Temples and Houses for easy approach of the devotees. *Antaryami* form is found in the cave of the heart of every Jiva without being affected by the defects of Jiva and perceptible to Yogis.

Liberation: (Moksha)

The Acharya plays the main role in making a Cetana (embodied soul) eligible for salvation. As revealed by Ramanuja in his *Saranagati Gadya* it is Goddess Sri who intercedes on behalf of the helpless soul and prompts the Lord to grant salvation. Prior to that, the soul passes through the stages of *Dhyana*, *Bhakti*, *Parabhakti* and *Parajnana* and as a result becomes impatient under the pain of separation from the Lord (Paramabhakti Stage), when comes Salvation. In the alternative, the soul must feel his helplessness and do total surrender to the Lord.

Salvation does not mean merging with Brahman nor remaining stone-like, with no action or reaction. While *Saalokya* (remaining in the same region-Vaikuntha). *Saamipya* (remaining close to Bhagavan) and *Saarupya* (having a form similar to Bhagavan) are interpreted in the usual way as other theistic systems, *Saayujya* has been interpreted in the Ramanuja School as equality in the degree of enjoyment (*Samaanabhogatvam*) with the Eternals stationed in Vaikuntha. Identity is not possible in the case of dissimilar entities. Cit, Acit and Isvara are basically dissimilar to each other. The pleasure that the liberated soul enjoys is equal to that of Nityas (the Eternals) and Bhagavan bereft of certain special privileges like the power of creation which Bhagavan alone has.

Since the liberator and the liberated are fond of each other, there is no opportunity for the liberated one to revisit the world of action. But if Bhagavan wills that some liberated

soul should return to the earth for correcting and claiming the wandering souls, such a return is possible. Since the Jiva whether bonded or liberated is always dependent on Bhagavan, even after liberation the soul continues to derive a selfless joy of serving Bhagavan (Sriman Narayana). This is Mokshaananda or Bliss in Salvation.

Ramanuja's last wishes and guidance to his followers (all hungry souls for that matter) are summed up while treating the Life of Ramanuja. The gist is this. One who has surrendered to the Lord (Prapanna) need not worry about his liberation. It is enough if he is devoted to Lord's true devotees, serves God in some way or the other staying in a holy place and recites Dvaya mantra concentrating on its meaning. A Prapanna can do whatever is possible for him. It is not scholarship that nurtures ego but it is humility before God and His devotees and compassion are the *sine qua non* of a true Srivaishnava.

SRI NIMBARKA

Nimbarka is a comparatively less known expounder of a philosophy which treats of dualism in non-dualism. This system is also known as Svabhavika bheda-abheda-vada which means that Brahman and the Universe are by nature different from each other and also one and the same. We may go into greater detail when his philosophical views are discussed.

Nothing much is known about the life history of Nimbarka except that he was a Tailanga Brahmin and that he came immediately after Ramanuja. Nimbarka's date can be taken as eleventh century A.D. without much certainty. Nimbarka's philosophy which is fairly widespread in the North exhibits a clear influence of Ramanuja. There are five important commentators on the Brahmasutra-Sankara, Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Madhva and Vallabha. While Sankara's commentary is an exposition of dry-intellectualism the other schools combine intellectualism with some form of devotionism, and all these schools are branches or different facets of Vaishnavism. It is generally believed that there are four Sampradayas expounding Vaishnavism-Sri Sampradaya of Ramanuja, Sanaka sampradaya of Nimbarka, Brahma Sampradaya of Madhva and Rudra Sampradaya of Vallabha.

Nimbarka wrote a succinct commentary on Brahmsutra entitled *Vedanta –parijata –saurabha* in a simple language. The peculiarity of this commentary is that it does not follow the traditional purvapaksha- siddhanta analysis. He does not attack any of his predecessors. He has propounded his theories without much expatiation. The understanding of Nimbarka's commentary was made easier by his disciple Srinivasa who wrote a brilliant gloss named *Vedanta Kaustubha*. Nimbarka also wrote a philosophical poem in ten verses under the title, *Dasasloki*. This brief work deals with the three tattvas- Brahman, Cit and Acit. Several of Nimbarka's works are believed to have been lost.

Nimbarka's Philosophy

The highest reality according to Nimbarka is Brahman with unlimited greatness. We see the imprint of Ramanuja's concept of Brahman. According to Nimbarka, Brahman is a personal God and is called Krishna or Hari. To Ramanuja the personal God is Srīman Narayana –Narayana accompanied by Sri; to Madhva the God is Vishnu. But according to Nimbarka, his Krishna is Gopala Krishna accompanied by Radha. This concept could have influenced Vallabha to a limited extent.

Nimbarka's Krishna-Brahman is eternal, independent omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. He has two aspects –the Absolute and the Relative. The Absolute is the Impersonal form and the Relative is the Personal form. The universe has emanated from the personal Brahman without exhausting Its infinite attributes and supremacy. Brahman

(Krishna) is Transcendental and Impersonal i.e. without attributes and hence It is much greater than the Universe. Brahman is both the material (*upadana*) as well as the efficient (*nimitta*) cause similar to Ramanuja's concept of Brahman. From the worldly point of view the upadana kaarana and nimitta kaarana are different from each other as a lump of clay (the material cause) is different from the potter (the efficient cause). There is no *sahakari karana* (instrumental cause) other than nimitta karana, for, the former merges with the latter because of the infinite power of Brahman. When Brahman does the transformation of Himself, He is the nimitta karana and as he transforms Himself, He is the upadana karana. According to Nimbarka as according to Ramanuja, creation means the manifestation of his subtle powers of Cit and Acit in the form of gross effects. Dissolution means the withdrawal of the gross effects into Himself in a subtle form. These arguments correspond to *sukshma-cid-acid-visishta Brahman* (Brahman qualified by Cit and Acit in their subtle form) prior to creation and *sthula-cid-acid-visishta Brahman* (Brahman qualified by Cit and Acit in their gross form) , as maintained by Ramanuja- which concept serves as the sheet-anchor of Visishtadvaita philosophy. The Cit and Acit (the sentience and the non-sentience) are the powers of Brahman and this power does not affect the possessor of power. For example fire has the power to produce smoke but the fire is not smoky.

Like Ramanuja, Nimbarka holds the view that though Brahman is of infinite greatness having power to create the world and sustain it as an all powerful ruler, He is supremely beauteous and blissful and full of grace. As Krishna reveals

in the Bhagavad Gita, Brahman is sweet and is in intimate relationship with His devotees. He grants moksha and enables them to have a vision of Himself. For their benefit and guidance He takes incarnations . Nimbarka captures the spirit of the Bhagavad Gita by presenting his Brahman endowed with majesty and sweetness, infinite power and abundant mercy. He is all-pervasive yet He resides in the heart of every living being. Thus Nimbarka subscribes to the concept of *Saguna Brahman*. The *Nirgunatva* (freedom from attributes) is explained by Nimbarka on the lines of Ramanuja as free from evil attributes. According to Nimbarka, Brahman can not avoid having evils which are found in this world, and everything without exception exists in him. The evils are not to be considered as part of His attributes. They remain as part of his sakti or power. When the world is created, it is a blend of virtues and vices. The all - auspicious god is also the seat of evils as evils are considered as such relatively.

Following Ramanuja, Nimbarka defines Jiva or the Individual Soul as *ajada* (non-material) and hence distinct from the body and the sense organs. The Jiva which is eternal is not only in the form of pure knowledge or intelligence(*jnana-svarupa*) it functions also as knower (*jnata or jnatrtva dharmavan*). This definition of Jiva is a near equivalent of '*dharmabhuta jnana*' upheld by Ramanuja. The Jiva is both a *Karta* and a *Bhokta* (doer and enjoyer). *Bhoktrtva* (the state of enjoyer) is a natural corollary of *kartrtva* (the state of doer). This bhoktrtva continues even after the Soul becomes free. In that freed state it becomes a partner in enjoying the bliss or ananda of Brahman, remaining under His control. Nimbarka like Ramanuja accepts dependence

(Seshatva) as a distinct nature of the Soul. The Soul is atomic in size and its attribute of Knowledge pervades the entire body like a lamp in a part of a room pervades the entire room through its pervasive rays. Both Ramanuja and Nimbarka do not accept the doctrine of all-pervasiveness (*vibhutva*) of the soul. While Ramanuja brings in '*adrshta*' or a special kind of consciousness which enables the Soul to enjoy the rewards in the regions other than this world Nimbarka wholly denies *vibhutva* to the soul as admittance of *vibhutva* will confer on the Soul, either eternal perception or eternal non-perception. According to Nimbarka, the number of Souls is infinite and different from each other and from Brahman. Here he differs from Ramanuja who maintains that the Soul is differentiated when it is embodied. The Soul is one in the sense that it is in the form of Knowledge but appears to be many when conditioned by bodies as we call a heap of paddy as simply paddy. While Ramanuja accepts three kinds of Souls-*baddha* (bonded), *mukta* (liberated) and *nitya* (eternal), Nimbarka categorises the souls under two heads-bonded and freed. When the souls are in bondage they are subject to births and rebirths based on their Karma. The freed souls escape from this world to be with Brahman. The bonded souls fall under two categories- those involved in Karma or action and those involved in Knowledge. Those involved in Karma are of two kinds-workers with devotion and sinful men. Those with Knowledge reach the world of Brahman through the path of gods (*devayana*); not to return to this world. The devoted workers reach heaven through the path of manes (*pitryana*) and return to the earth as men or animals according to their past Karmas. The sinners go to hell to return to the earth as very low forms of life like worms and insects.

Nimbarka holds the view that Acit is of three kinds.

- (1) *Prakṛta* is derived from the mulaprakṛti and pertains to this earth.
- (2) *Aprakṛta* is that which is not derived from prakṛti. This aprakṛta form belongs to the realm of heavenly worlds, and the regions of Brahman. *Prakṛti* as such is under the full control of Brahman and never independent.
- (3) The third variety is *Kala* or Time which is eternal (nitya) and all-pervasive (vibhu). Though *Kala* (Time) controls everything, it is itself under total control of the Lord. According to Visishtadvaita view Time is an instrument of the cosmic lila of Iswara. In this context, the Lord functions as if He is dependent on Time. But in the Lord's region (nityavibhūti) though Time exists the Lord is quite independent of Time. In dealing with Acit, Nimbarka follows Ramanuja though not so very elaborately.

Brahma – Cit – Acit relationship

Brahman is the controller (*niyanta*), the Cit – or Sentient is (*bhokta*) enjoyer and the Acit or Non-sentient is the object of enjoyment (*bhogyā*). Brahman, Cit and Acit are mutually different. Brahman controls the Cit by dwelling inside it (*antaryami*). In the liberated state the Soul attains the nature of Brahman (*tadbhāvapatti*). But it does not mean that the Soul is identical with Brahman. In fact it is similar to Brahman. The Soul is not omnipotent as it is atomic in size

and it is still under the control of Brahman. Brahman is the cause and both Cit and Acit are His effects both before and after liberation. Hence they are naturally and inherently different from one another. There is a natural and eternal difference among these three. This establishes the Svabhavikabheda. Since Cit and Acit are like cause and effect as well as part and the whole of Brahman, there is non-difference also (Svabhavika abheda). The Clay and the pot (cause and effect) are non-different as clay exists in the pot, but they are also different because they have different forms, attributes and functions. Similarly we cannot speak of the whole, when a part is absent. The part has no separate existence as it is immanent in the whole. That is why Nimbarka's Philosophy is explained as an exposition of Svabhavika – bheda-abheda-vada.

Liberation according to Nimbarka

Moksha or Salvation according to Nimbarka is the condition in which the soul so far devoid of its intrinsic nature and attributes in the embodied state shines in its full splendour having attained full jnana svarupa. This liberated state is comparable to a lamp hidden inside a pot for quite sometime shining forth with full brilliance when taken out of the pot. The Soul is in the form of Sat, Cit and Ananda like Brahman. It is also ageless, deathless, painless and free from hunger and thirst etc. Its independence is full but under the control of the Lord. The liberated soul is identical with Brahman with the following limitations:

1. While the freed soul is atomic in size (anu) Brahman is all- pervasive(Vibhu)
2. Despite the Soul being identical with Brahman, creation, sustenance and destruction of the Universe (Jagadvyapara) rests only with Brahman.
3. The freed Soul despite its freedom is still under the control of the Lord.

Like Ramanuja 'Jivanmukti' -salvation here and now, is not supported by Nimbarka. He accepts only 'Videhamukti' as the Soul gets its full splendour only after salvation.

The means of attaining salvation , according to Nimbarka are fivefold, each one, when properly adopted, leads to moksha either directly or through a process.

1. **Karma** : Nimbarka does not accept Karma as a direct means of salvation. When Karma is performed with a sense of selflessness and a sense of phalatyaga , such an action purifies the mind. Such a mind is fit for acquiring right knowledge which leads to moksha as all systems of Indian philosophy accept the dictum Jnanan-moksha(h). Salvation is through jnana only. The definition of jnana slightly varies from system to system.
2. **Knowledge** : The true knowledge of Brahman and the Self leads one to moksha, but for this, one must perform the asrama-dharmas(duties pertaining to one's station in life) in a dispassionate and

disinterested manner. Not only the external acts like sacrifices but also the internal control of the senses is required. Other qualities like sastraic learning, simplicity and absence of ego and vanity are also required.

3. Upasana : Nimbarka recommends three kinds of meditation: (a) Meditation on Brahman as one's own Self, as Brahman is the in-dweller of the Soul. (b).Meditation on Brahman as the in-dweller of the Non-sentient. (c). Meditation on Brahman as different from Sentient and Non-sentient. While Ramanuja equates Upasana with Bhakti.Nimbarka supports madhurya-bhakti—a kind of sweet and loving relationship of the Soul with the Lord. There is only a superficial difference in treating Upasana and Bhakti but when we go deep we could understand that Nimbarka follows the postulates of Ramanuja. While Ramanuja's Bhakti is aiswarya - pradhana (through (Lord's) power and splendour coupled with His mercy Nimbarka's Bhakti is madhurya - pradhana, (through (the devotee's) love and friendship). Religion begins with fear of God, reverence and awe but for a devotee who has come closer to God, the relationship is one of love and friendship
4. Prapatti: This is an effective Sadhana according to Nimbarka. When the Soul gives up its individuality completely and solely depends upon God, He himself leads the soul to Salvation.This does not mean cessation of all activity but one should do what is

pleasing to God and avoid whatever will be disliked by Him. Love for humanity, a sense of total helplessness and total surrender to God are the other requisites. A sense of resignation on the part of the Soul is repugnant to Nimbarka. One must always strive to follow the right path and adopt good conduct.

5. Gurupasatti: Surrender to the Acarya is also an effective sadhana supported by Nimbarka. The guru will do whatever is needed for the surrenderer and will lead the devotee to God. Nimbarka compares the acarya to a mother with a suckling child as it is the mother who takes medicines for curing the sick child. Here we find a parallel to the post - Ramanuja concept of the Acarya being an effective Upaya.

In all the above five sadhanas recommended by Nimbarka we find the influence of Ramanuja's Philosophical and Theological ideas. While Ramanuja postulates the godship as mithuna, a couple viz. Narayana with his consort Sri, Nimbarka who favours madhurya bhakti presents his God as cowherd Krishna (Gopalakrishna) accompanied by Radha and Gopis. Thus Nimbarka happens to be the precursor of Radha-Krishna cult which has captured the Northern parts of India and which has been nurtured by Jayadeva, Vallabha and a host of Saints.

The doctrines of Nimbarka provide a happy blend of intellectualism and emotionalism without over-emphasizing anyone. After all, Man's inquest into spirituality becomes complete and full only when he applies his head and heart.

SRI MADHVACARYA

Nimbarka held that Brahman, Cit (Sentient) and Acit (non-sentient) are by nature different from one another and hence he is considered to be an advocate of Svabhavika bheda - abheda vada. To Madhavacarya there is no identity of the three as Brahman is much higher than the other two. Sankara postulated that when Maya is superimposed on the Nirguna Brahman the phenomenal Universe 'appears'. Madhva used the same proposition to stress the duality of Brahman and the Universe. In a similar way he differed from Ramanuja who maintained that Brahman is cid-acid- visishta (the sentient and the non-sentient are the inseparable adjuncts of Brahman) by stating that oneness between Brahman on one hand and the components of cit and acit on the other is unthinkable; Brahman retains its supreme character and aloofness. This is Bhedavada pure and simple and its author is Madhvacharya. His sampradaya is otherwise known as Brahma-mimamsa or Sad - vaishnavism as distinguished from Ramanuja's Sri Vaishnavism. Madhva is probably the only Indian philosopher who postulated absolute difference between Brahman and Universe by stressing their individual nature although Ramanuja maintained a different kind of difference - that of the subtle (sukshma) form of Brahman from the gross (sthula) form.

Madhva was born in a village called Biligram near Udupi at the close of the 12th century. (probably in the year 1197 A.D) and lived for seventy nine years. When he had his traditional education in the school, he concentrated more on athletics than on studies. He had a strong physique and he used to win over his playmates in atheletics. Somehow he could not concentrate on his studies in the atmosphere of a school with all its regimen but liked studying sacred literature at home and soon emerged as a great scholar. He developed a deep interest in the Puranas and Nyayasastra. He renounced the world at the age of twentyfive and as a monk he continued the study of Vedanta under Acyutapreksha who was a Vaishnavite sanyasi. After entry into the order of a sanyasi he was known as Purnaprajna and Ananda Tirtha.

Like Ramanuja who differed from his teacher Yadavaprakasa, in the interpretation of the scriptural texts, Madhva also did not like the interpretations given by his guru. Madhva wrote an independent commentary on the Bhagavad Gita which had its own appeal because of its logical presentation. Thereafter he started studying the sacred literature deeply and very soon formulated a philosophy of his own.

Madhva travelled extensively and widened his knowledge by engaging the adherents of the other systems of philosophy in debates. This has honed his argumentative ability. Soon he began to attract a large number of followers. Madhva had four disciples who took to ascetic order and they are Padmanabha Tirtha, Narahari Tirtha, Maadhava Tirtha and Akshobhya Tirtha.

Madhva's Philosophy

Madhva attaches importance to defining godhead through Knowledge. He does not posit the nature and the essence of things or beings including God to knowing everything without caring for established truths. The Vedas are regarded as authority because they are authorless revelations. To Madhva, Veda or Sruti is the source of correct knowledge and this knowledge enables one to understand the one Reality i.e Brahman. He calls himself 'tyaktaveda' not because he has no regard for Veda but because Vedas are not authoritative in the sense that Brahman, the Supreme Truth lends authoritativeness to Sruti as Sruti is the medium through which Brahman expresses Itself. If Sruti does not establish the Supreme Truth why should one honour Sruti? Instead of fitting Truth to Vedic utterance Madhva does the other way round. That is why Madhva calls Brahman as Sarvottama, an independent doer (Karta) and makes others do (karayita) independently.

The Universe is the creation of Brahman and Its expression. The Universe derives its reality as it is not separate from Brahman. This points to the abheda aspect. The difference between the transcendental and ever inexhaustive Brahman being the source of the reality of the world, then the Universe is dependant on It and in this sense there is bheda. By its very nature Brahman is svatantra. It is defined as eka (one) and advitiya (second to none).

According to Madhva, Karma should not precede Knowledge with the thought that Karma purifies the mind enabling one to acquire Knowledge, which is Ramanuja's

view. Madhva reverses the sequence saying that one should have right Knowledge to do the right Karma. Karma devoid of Knowledge, therefore, is of no use.

Madhva follows Ramanuja in affirming that to say Brahman is nirvisesha (attributeless) is a deception for attributelessness itself becomes an attribute and this is a standard criticism against Advaita. To Madhva, Brahman is Vishnu. (*Brahma sabdasca Visnau eva*).

Even though whatever is uttered by a reliable person (apta) is considered a Pramana as per the tenets of Logic, Madhva's idea of Pramanata of Sruti is not because of its being aptavakya as to take such a position reduces the status of Sruti because reliability or aptatva is an external factor. Sruti is Svatahpramana, nitya and nirdosha. All these are possible because of the apauresheyatva of Sruti. This knowledge is possible through Jijnasa or inquiry comprising the process of sravana, manana and nididhyasana. Madhva attaches a lot of importance to Jijnasa - Jijnasa of Brahman who grants the status of 'being' to everything other than Itself. It is this Jijnasa that negates the unreality of the Universe and establishes Brahman as its cause. According to Madhva, Jnana, Karma and Bhakti are all part and parcel of Jijnasa and Jijnasa naturally rests on pramanas. As to Ramanuja, to Madhva also these are three only - Pratyaksha (perception), Anumana (inference) and Agama (verbal testimony). Madhva classifies Agama under two heads- apaurusheya and purusheya. The latter is acceptable so long as it does not clash with the former. Prameya, the object of Knowledge i.e., Brahman, is satya in its absolute sense. Since the Universe is a part of Brahman as well as Its expression, it is also satya.

Brahman according to Madhva is Vishnu and is 'alaukika'. Therefore It is always an object of inquiry (Jijnasa). Brahman is one single principle seen as everything else. Brahman is bimba, the object and all else are Its pratibimba. The bimba is full (gunapurna), defectless (nirdosha), the object of knowing (jneya) and the one to be attained (gamyā). Since there is no difference between the bimba and the pratibimba, the World also is full and as defectless as Brahman. Once this truth is realized, one attains Bliss that is Brahman.

The World is a commentary on the supreme power of Brahman. There are two categories of Vishnu's creation Cetana, and Acetana, Both have their Abhimani - devatas. Madhva refers to three types of Cetanas. Cetana indicates a 'being' with the power of knowing. Knowledge produced by a search after Brahman is the supreme form of knowledge.

- (1) That Cetana in whom a disposition to this knowledge is seen through a keen desire, avoidance of the path of non-knowledge conscious of its defects and training under a Brahmanishtha belongs to the superior category. This Cetana is fit for moksha.**
- (2) That Cetana who is a contrast to the one disciplined as above is tamoyogya - fit for eternal damnation.**
- (3) That Cetana who is wavering in his disposition becomes an eternal samsarin and gets into repeated births and deaths undergoing happiness and misery. Through the grace of Vishnu which is the pronounced**

manifestation of Jnana and Ananda the Cetana imbibes more Jijnasa and more Vairagya from which springs Vishnubhakti which is the path to Moksha.

The cetanas falling under the various categories is the result of the will of Vishnu.

Acetana has no cognition. The Vedas, Akasa, Kala and Prakrti are Bhava Acetanas and the three kinds of Abhava (prak, pradhvamsa and anyonya) are the Abhava Acetanas. Atyantabhava is unacceptable in this System as everything is real.

Acetana is less real than Cetana on account of the absence of consciousness in the former.

Both the Cetana and the Acetana are controlled by Abhimani devatas as mentioned already. Lakshmi is the Abhimani devata of all the Cetanas as well as Acetanas. This position of Lakshmi may be compared with Ramanuja's view of Lakshmi as the foremost of Cetanas.

The reality of the World is unquestionable and difference is the essence of the world order. Madhva lists these differences as fivefold. (1) Between God and Cetana (Individual Souls). (According to Madhva eternal difference between Brahman and Jivas (Individual Souls) is revealed in the Mahavakya 'Atatvamasī' (Madhva takes the Sruti passage '.....atma tatvamasī svetaketo' in a totally different manner-the missing 'a' in 'tatvamasī' is as attributable to the rules of Sanskrit Grammar) (2) Between God and Acetana (things lacking in consciousness) (3) Between one Cetana

and another (4) Between Cetana and Jada-prakrti; and (5) within Jadaprakrti, its parts are distinct from each other.

Moksha is attained through Jijnasa. By the grace of Vishnu, the soul realises its dependence on Vishnu and attains moksha. As Madhva attaches a lot of importance to Jijnasa (the burning desire to know) he holds that the individual soul's bliss is in proportion to the quantum of Jijnasa. Brahman is the cause of bondage and moksha.

According to Madhva, philosophy is nothing but spiritual discipline. Bondage is caused by assuming doership with the thought that one is svatantra. Brahman alone is svatantra. Doership with the thought that he (the doer) is paratantra enables him to understand the reality or the highest truth which is Narayana. He is full and complete in every way. The realisation of Truth is possible only by svadhyaya and pravacana which is Brahmanimamsa and which leads to pure Ananda.

The gods Brahma and others prayed to Paramatma, Lord Vishnu, to redeem the souls steeped in ignorance and misled by the Sunyavadins (Budhists) and Mayavadins (Advaitins); and the Lord bade Mukhya-prana i.e., Vayu to be born as Madhva to give proper direction to the souls. Mukhya-prana was chosen because the kaliyuga cannot corrupt him. He is the one who gave to the world the Vaishnava mantras especially Pranava. The Lord enlightened Brahma with some oral revelations other than what is contained in the Veda and Mahabharata. These revelations are known as Sampradaya which has come down through Sri Vayu. He knows all the actions of

Paramatma and acts as an intermediary between all beings and the Supreme Lord as He dwells in every being.

The Pratipadya Devata in Vishnu- mantras is Narayana; that of mantras praising Sri, is Lakshmi; and Brahma is the Partipadya Devata in the rest of the Vedic portion. Lakshmi, Brahma and Sarasvati, and Vayu and Bharati are considered as 'para suklatraya.' They are completely free from ignorance and above all gods.

Mukhyaprana incarnated as Anjaneya in Tretayuga, as Bhima in Dvaparayuga and as Madhva in Kaliyuga. A new explanation for Rama's killing of Vali is worth noting in this context. Rama killed Vali and saved Sugriva on the advice of Anjaneya who was an unerring intellectual well versed in all branches of knowledge.

The works of Madhvacarya

Madhvacarya also known as Ananda Tirtha wrote four Bhashyas on the following works:

**1. Brahmasutra, 2. Ten principal Upanishads
3. Bhagavad Gita 4. A few opening passages of the Rg Veda.**

His ten treatises collectively known as Dasaprakaramam bring out the essentials of his philosophy. His Bhagavata tatparya nirnaya, Vishnu-tatva nirnaya and Mahabharata-tatparya nirnaya are very helpful in understanding his philosophy. He wrote several other minor works. The total number of his known works is thirty seven. He is

believed to have written two other works 'Tithinirnaya' and 'Nyasa paddhati'. All his thirty seven works which have a cogency and continuity are collectively known as 'Sarvamula'. Jayatirtha who is believed to be an incarnation of Madhvacarya otherwise known as Ananda Tirtha, has commented on almost all the works of Madhvacarya.

SRI RAMANANDA

The Bhakti sampradaya caused a revolution in the social milieu in North India. The Spiritual pursuit confined to higher classes came to be adopted with a great fervour by the people of the lower strata of society as it was a newly found experience. Naturally they felt a feeling of elation and elevation. But in South India especially Tamil Nadu, Bhakti is considered to be a sadhana and is to be acquired after a strict mental and physical discipline. Bhakti sprouts in a mind which has been cleansed by Jnana acquired through the study of the Scriptures, which has been prohibited for certain classes as they were considered basically unfit for Initiation. So Bhakti became a qualification for a fit person—the fitness being decided by acquisitions of scriptural knowledge. This question was raised in the case of Nammalvar (who represents all the other Alvars) whether he, basically ineligible for Bhakti on account of his birth, could practise Bhakti. The answer was that what he did was not Bhakti as a Sadhana; but it was Prapatti or Surrender which can be practised by everybody. Even though Ramanuja favoured Bhakti facilitated by Jnana, he was not averse to Surrender as a potent upaya (*tasya ca vasikaranam tat saranagatireva* — Sri Bhashya I.4.1)

This concept of Prapatti did not find much favour with the Vaishnavite Reformers of North India; perhaps they felt that Prapatti meant inaction [*svapravritti nivritti(h) prapatti(h)*] or withdrawal from action. So, many spiritual leaders favoured Bhakti. The social reformers saw the effect of Bhakti in unifying the people as in North India Bhakti was practised through *namasankirtanam*, and idol worship was thrown open to everyone. So they utilised this kind of Bhakti to create an egalitarian society. Mahatma Gandhi and Balagangadhar Tilak utilised Bhakti to create social harmony. K.Damodaran, a Gandhian (Former syndicate member of the Annamalai University) observes. "Indeed the Bhakti movement in India has many points of resemblance to the Reformation movement led by Wycliffe, Luther and Thomas Munzer. The keynote of the movement was bhakti (devotion) to Lord Vishnu and his avatars, Rama and Krishna. But it was not a purely religious movement..... It expressed itself in the cultural field as a national renaissance; in its social content it represented a revolt of great significance against domination and the injustices of the caste system" (*Indian Thought - A Critical Survey*, Asia Publishing House, Madras, 1917, p.315). But in Tamil Nadu (Dravida desa to be precise) the effort to consolidate society was aided not so much by Bhakti as by Prapatti or Saranagati.

In the North, the first person to champion Prapatti or Surrender was Ramananda. Not very much is known about his life in detail. He must have lived between 14th and 15th centuries A.D. According to another account Ramananda seems to have lived for 111 years between 1299 and 1410 A.D. His name is very popular in the North as a propagator(?)

of Ramanuja philosophy. He claims to have come in the lineage of Ramanuja as the fifth in the line of gurus. This claim could not be corroborated by the accounts in the Srivaishnava guruparampara, nor could be totally dispensed with. There is a distant possibility of Ramanada being a disciple of the Totadri (Nanguneri) Mutt which came into existence in the mid-fifteenth century. But there is little doubt that he travelled in South India including several religious centres like Srirangam in Tamil Nadu.

Ramananda was a brahmin by birth, his place of birth being Prayag. (Allahabad). He felt an urge to show a simple way to approach God even by the lowliest of the lowly. Even though he himself was a scholar in Sanskrit, he avoided that high-flown language and started preaching in the language of the people. This method was adopted by him by simultaneously presenting Rama as an ideal for all human relationships. Rama is portrayed throughout the epic Ramayana as fighting for dharma and establishing it after destroying adharma. He is also depicted as an incarnation of Vishnu - Narayana. (The Adhyatma Ramayana a text of the late 14th Century gives a philosophical and that too an advaitic twist to the earlier Ramayana of Valmiki). Ramananda recommends the chanting of the names of Rama and meditate on the various incidents centering round Rama.

As mentioned earlier he was much influenced by the Srivaishnava acharyas- most probably some post-Ramanuja Acharyas- who developed a tradition of recitation of holy mantras. Ramananda too introduced that tradition

(outside Tamil Nadu) in North India. Being a staunch devotee of Rama, he introduced Tirumantram and Dvayam substituting the name of 'Rama' in the place of 'Narayana,' as '*Om Ramaya nama(h)*' and '*Srimad Ramacandra-caranau saranam prapadye; Srimate Ramacandraya Nama(h)*' The prime caramasloka according to Srivaishnava acaryas is Krishnacarama-sloka occurring in the Bhagavad Gita '*sarva dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja/ aham tva sarvapapebhyo mokshayishyami ma suca(h)*!! (XVIII-66).

Consistant with his supreme regard for Rama and Ramayana, Ramananda recommends the Rama carama-sloka as the third mantra viz., *sakrudeva prapannaya tavasmi itica yacate/ abhayam sarva bhutebhyo dadami etad vratam mamall* (Ramayana, VI-18.33). Ramananda's work '*Srivaishnava-matabja-bhaskara*' contains these mantras with,their elaboration. Ramananda does not seem to have left any other written works. His followers carry on his philosophy and mission. Ramananda's work mentioned earlier contains ten questions and their answers. The above mentioned mantras are in answer to the question '*kim japyam*' (what is it that should be recited?)

As Ramananda chose Rama as his favourite God, his successors also followed suit. His disciple Tulasidas chose to write his *Ramacaritamanasa* in the Avadhi language, a dialect of Hindi.

Ramananda must have studied the various approaches to god-realisation, the Vedic way of life, Jnana and Bhakti schools, the Tantric order of life, the Smrtis and

the Yogic way of life. His visit to Tamil Nadu, where the post-Ramanuja acharyas like Sri Krishna (Periavaccan Pillai), Pillai Lokacarya and Alagiyamanavalapperumal Nayanar who gave a new twist to spiritual practice by stressing on the dissolution of caste in the case of a true Bhagavata, and the efficiency of surrender to God through a proper guru, must have changed his attitude. He effected a synthesis between the Yogic meditation and the absolute surrender (Prapatti) bringing North and South together. Some consider Ramananda's philosophy as part of Sri Sampradaya. Ramananda gathered a large number of disciples through his teachings alone. These disciples are known as Ramavats or Ramanandis.

Rama and Krishna—though they are avatars of the Supreme God Narayana, they were born as human beings in Ayodhya and Mathura which are not very far away from each other. But Krishna has become a popular god and Krishna bhakti a popular spiritual approach. But in South India Rama seems to be more popular than Krishna, even though Krishna is in the hearts and lips of everyone—the Alvars, the recipients of divine grace and ordinary poets—being attracted by his beauty, childish pranks and a tendency (Sausilya) to mix freely with all, whether high or low. Rama with his royal background is on a higher plane although his eagerness to be accessible to all is quite visible.

According to Ramananda, the Supreme Lord is in the form of mithuna or divyadampati viz., Rama in close company with Sita. Rama is the visible form of Divinity i.e. Isvara with Sita as His maya, power and creative activity. To

Rama, Dharma is the highest truth and is also the means to heaven (*ramo vigrahavan dharma(h)*)(Ramayana, III - 37.13) and '*satyena lokan jayati* (Ibid. II). Rama is revered not merely because he is a divine incarnation but also because he was a champion of Dharma. Ramananda took Rama as a symbol of purity, love and mercy, free from any imperfection. Since one cannot expect these qualities in Nirguna Brahman, to Ramananda, Rama appeared impressive because of the above qualities. Rama became dear not only to the people of Ayodhya during his lifetime but to everyone who hears the narration of his life-style. He is dear to one's heart as a friend or a beloved. When Rama who set lofty ideals for himself and put them into practice, he became dear to Ramananda who instructed his followers to eschew all distinctions based on birth or status. His fundamental teaching was the religion of love and devotion.

The followers of Ramananda have a great regard for Hanuman also, who was a trusted lieutenant of Rama and they venerate him for his prowess and magical powers. While Valmiki skipped the life of Rama as a child (in his *Ramayana*) this sampradaya filled that gap by borrowing the childhood exploits of Krishna as though they are Rama's.

The reason for Ramananda choosing Rama as the Supreme Godhead for his school of philosophy was, of course, prompted by the purity of his character and universal affection. For the same reason he chose Sita, a symbol of purity. The combination stressed 'one man-one wife' concept. Ramananda decidedly acted in this way as Radha-Krishna

cult in course of time, tended to encourage amoral activities. In course of time Radha got an exalted position giving room for men to don the robes of a lady leading to trans-sexualism. To counter this Namadeva and Tukaram of Maharashtra presented Rukmini, the wedded wife of Krishna playing a subordinate role to Krishna. Ramananda's concept of Rama-Sita pair was framed for similar reasons.

Ramanada had twelve followers who had unshakable faith in him. As he chose the popular language of the people to spread his gospel he did not discriminate his followers on the basis of caste. A cobbler by name Ravidasa, a Muslim weaver Kabir, a Jat peasant by name Dhanna, a barber by name Sena, a Rajput Pipa and one Bhavananda were his direct disciples. Six more belonging to Ramanuja Sampradaya (Sukhananda, Asananda, Surasurananda, Paramananda, Mahananda and Sri Ananda) joined the bandwagon of Ramananda. The great woman devotee of Krishna, Mirabai fulfilled her spiritual discipline under Ravidasa popularly known as Raidas.

The Ramanandis belong to three categories: viz., Renouncers or ascetics; non-renouncers still living a secluded and disciplined life; and house-holders. The householders offer financial support to the other two groups. The non-renouncers live in monasteries or asramas found in large numbers throughout Western and Central India, the Ganges basin, the lower terrain of Himalayas and also Nepal. The Renouncers are the most respected Ramanandis and they travel to all major Vaishnava pilgrim centres in groups. The Ramananda sect is a force to reckon with in the north

of India. Ramananda Sampradaya is also known as Janaki - Vallabha Sampradaya.

We come across another Ramananda who lived between 1738 A.D and 1801 A.D. Since he is believed to be an incarnation of Uddhava, his doctrine is known as Uddhava Sampradaya. But he does not seem to be a staunch devotee of Rama. He is believed to have been initiated as a Vaishnava by Sri Krishna. It was this Ramananda who became the guru of Ghanasyama, the pre-initiation name of Swami Narayan.

SRI VALLABHACARYA

Devotion to a personal god as a means of salvation has been handled from Sankara onwards in a systematic way. Long before Sankara there was the Bhagavata school worshipping Vasudeva - Krishna as the supreme deity. The term Bhagavan and Vasudeva are almost synonymous. (ref. the *dvadasakshari* - a twelve lettered mantra '*Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya.*') This is probably a reason why Sankara uses the term Vasudeva very often to denote God in general and Narayana in particular. (Ref: his commentary on the Bhagavad Gita VII. 19- '*Vasudeva(h) sarvam iti/ Ya evam sarvatmanam mam narayanam pratipadyate/ sa mahatma*'. Sankara says that by the passage '*Vasudeva (h) sarvam etc*' the Lord declares that he is a mahatma who knows Lord Krishna as Narayana, the soul of everything in the Universe). Even though Sankara the proponent of Advaita could not accommodate Krishna worship - or worship of any sectarian god for that matter within the strict framework of his philosophy, he had to yield to worship of a personal god in the day to day life - which is called the Vyavaharika state - either for disciplining the mind or as a step which a person discards once he climbs up. But the charms of Krishna brought out in Harivamsa, Vishnu Purana and later in other Puranas, were so irresistible that a staunch Advaitin

in the line of Sankara viz. Madhusudana Sarasvati (16th century A.D) records his admiration to Krishna in a beautiful verse thus:

*Vamsivibhushitakarāt nāvaniradabhat,
pitambarad aruṇābimba-phaladharoṣṭhat/
pūmendusundara-mukhat aravinda netrat
krishnat param kimapi tatvam aham na jāne//*

(Gudharthadipika on Bhagavad Gita XV-20)

“I am not aware of any reality other than Krishna whose hands are ornamented by the flute, whose complexion is that of fresh water-laden cloud, whose face is charming like the full moon and whose eyes are (charming) like lotus flower.”

Among the several incarnations of Lord Narayana, those of Rama and Krishna are considered ‘purna’ or full, in the sense that all the qualities of the Supreme God are found in each one of them. In the case of Krishna, free accessibility was an additional attraction. His birth in the Yadava clan made everyone feel His greatness coupled with a sense that He is close to everyone. While in the South, the Alvars revered Krishna as the most favourable incarnation of Sriman Narayana, in the North, Jayadeva of the 12th century conferred the status of Supreme Godhead on Krishna. Krishna bhakti, thereafter, started enveloping the entire North India starting from Bengal. Every Religious Reformer used the theme of Radha-Krishna to project his view point in a manner suited to his basic tenets. It was the turn of a South Indian Philosopher, Sri Vallabhacharya who migrated to North India to establish his philosophy of Suddhadvaita elevating Krishna to the level of Supreme Brahman. While Sri

Ramanuja equated Bhakti to Jnana, Sri Vallabhacharya equated it to Seva or service to the Lord.

Life of Vallabhacharya

Vallabha was the second son of one Lakshmana Bhatt of Vellanada Telugu Brahmin family settled in a town by name Kakarvad on the banks of the river Krishna. Before the birth of Vallabha, Lakshmana Bhatt undertook a pilgrimage to the sacred places in the North and finally settled in Benares with his family. Owing to disturbances caused by Muslims he and his family moved to the South. At that time Lakshmana Bhatt's wife, Yallamagaru was pregnant. When the couple halted at Champaranya (near Chotanagar) Vallabha was born. The year was 1473 A.D as accepted by a large number of scholars. (Some suggest a later date-1479 A.D). At the time of birth, the child had no sign of life as it was still born. The parents abandoned the child wrapped in a piece of cloth, under a tree and rested in a nearby village. The very next day they came to know that the child was alive and kicking. When they went to the spot where the child was, they saw to their wonder the child being encircled by fire as a protection. For this reason Vallabha is considered an incarnation of Agni. They picked up the child, stayed in Champaranya for some time and once again settled in Varanasi as the living conditions became normal there.

Vallabha, as the child was named, was quite intelligent but deeply engrossed in the lilas of Krishna. The young boy was tutored in the Vedas and all other earlier systems of philosophy by his father and by a band of specialists. He evinced a profound interest in the *Bhagavata Purana* which was raised to the status of a Prasthanas (Book of Authority)

when he propounded his Suddhadvaita philosophy which is also known as Pushti-marga.

Vallabha spent around fifteen years in pilgrimages as it is generally believed that travel makes a man much wiser. His main mission was to popularise the *Bhagavata* by his enthralling discourses. He was respected as Balasarasvati. He had a verbal encounter with one Dhondhi, a Mimamsaka performing animal sacrifices. Vallabha convinced Dhondhi that though sacrifices are recommended in the Karma kanda, they will not grant everlasting bliss which can be achieved only by practising devotion. Next he met an Advaita scholar and engaged him in a debate. Vallabha's argument was on these lines: "You say Brahman which is formless (*nirakara*) is reflected in the mirror of Maya and appears as Universe. You also say that Maya is beginningless and also unclean. Your arguments are full of self-contradiction. My questions are: (1) How can formless Brahman be reflected? (2) If Brahman and Maya are both without beginning, are they eternal entities defying your doctrine of non-dualism? (3) How can a reflection take place in an unclean mirror? (4) If you say Brahman is enveloped in Maya, how can the reflection take place?"

These questions could not be answered by the scholar convincingly. Next, at a different venue, Vallabha gave an exposition on *Khyativada* (Theory of Error). An error or a misconception cannot deny the reality of the subject of discussion. A rope may be mistaken for snake. Both are real separately. But when the Satvic quality of the intellect is clouded, a different idea is produced. In the same manner

the reality of the Universe which is Sat form of Brahman is imagined as false, through wrong perception.

Vallabha then visited Vijayanagar. At that time Krishnadevaraya was the ruler. A debate was to be arranged between the followers of Sankara and those of Madhva. It was actually a debate - between Advaitins and Dvaitins. Vyasa-tirtha was the adjudicator. Vallabha though not a supporter of either of the schools, argued for Dualism without going too far into it. By doing so he would become unfaithful to his philosophy. In this debate he established that Bhagavata purana should be venerated as the fourth Prasthanas along with the three other accepted Prasthanas viz., Brahmasutras, Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita. He also made it clear that he accepted only one Pramana as valid and that is Agama or Verbal Testimony. He then proceeded to highlight his Suddhadvaita point of view thus: Brahman is both formless and having form; without attributes at the same time is possessed of attributes. Brahman is without body but the in-dweller of bodies. The Upanishads describe Brahman as having various limbs and thus support Brahman with form or a Personal God. Impersonal Brahman and Personal God are one and the same. Vallabha also attacked the Theory of Maya of Advaitins in strong terms. In the same manner he rejected the dualism of the Madhva School but supported Madhva's concept of Devotion as a means of attaining the grace of God. Vallabha explained his Suddhadvaita as establishing one Brahman untainted by Maya (Suddha). Brahman whether it is Absolute (paramarthika) or relative (Vyavahrika) is one and is the (upadana) material and (nimitta) efficient cause of the

Universe. Brahman can be attained only by Devotion. The king on coming to know of the erudition of Vallabha, invited him to his court, performed Kanakabhisheka and honoured him with the title of 'Acarya'.

Vallabha continued his journey southward. On the way he was accosted by a yogi who claimed to possess magical powers. Vallabha humbled him saying that there is no power greater than the 'nama' of the Lord. When he came to Vishnukanchi he wanted to worship Lord Varadaraja. Since on the steps to the shrine (on the southern side) were inscribed Jaydeva's Ashtapadi, he refrained from placing his foot on the steps. He got into the shrine to have darshan only after the steps were temporarily removed. (Even now well informed devotees avoid the steps on the southern side but use the northern side for both going up and coming down) At Kanchi, Vallabha declared his respect for Ramanuja's philosophy with the following rider. 'That the Soul and the Universe are inseparable attributes of Brahman is not appealing to me. I consider them as His amsas. It is amsa-amsi bhava and not sarira-sarira bhava. They are parts of Brahman. If they were Brahman's attributes how can we maintain that Brahman is free from svagata, sajatiya and vijatiya bhedas? (Differences that are inherent, Differences due to similarity and Differences due to dissimilarity). The Brahmasutra (II.3.43) speaks of Souls as parts of Brahman just like sparks from fire. I am fully in agreement with Sri Ramanuja's exposition other than on this point. Like him I also hold that the Universe is real'.

Next halt of Vallabha was Srirangam where he silenced

one Raghavacarya an advocate of Bhedabheda vada (Brahman is non-dual as well as dual) saying that his view was against scriptural authority. Further two qualities, if they are mutually opposed to each other, cannot coexist in one place. One must accept either bheda or a bheda (To think of the existence of a Bhedebhedavadi at Srirangam at that point of time is quite unbelievable as this Sampradaya adumbrated by Bhaskara and Yadava has practically ceased to exist at the time of Vallabha. Nimbarka's Svabhavika bhedabheda vada had no followers in deep South).

Vallabha visited a number of holy places in the South and whenever an opportunity arose he did not fight shy of attacking Sankara's Mayavada. He recommended unconditional devotion to Krishna as a means of salvation. When he was at Pandharpur (Pandaripura) to have a darshan of Vittalesa, he felt that he should get married, because for Hindus marriage is a sacrament, a samskara. The Smritis prescribe marriage as the means of pleasing the manes. Lord Vithoba appeared in his (Vallabha's) dream and revealed that soon he must enter into the state of a householder when a suitable girl is offered to him in his native place. Vallabha received a command from the Lord that one of his two sons should be named after Him. He left Pandharpur and travelling through Maharastra he settled down at Gokula discoursing on the *Bhagavata*.

At Gokula, Vallabha consolidated his ideas about Godhead, the nature of the souls and of the Universe and the efficacy of devotion and service to Krishna. Mathura and the surrounding areas known as Vrajabhumi were very

dear to his heart as these were places where Krishna was born and spent his childhood. He felt it was the right place to start recording his views on his "Pushti sampradaya"-the doctrine of divine grace. A number of works big and small were written here. *Tattvartha-dipa-nibandha*, *Anu Bhashya*-a commentary on Brahmasutras, a commentary on *Bhagavata* by name *Subodhini* and a collection of sixteen minor works which are collectively known as *Shodasa-granthas* were either commenced or completed here.

Vallabhacharya shifted the idol of Sri Nathji from a small shrine at Govardhana to a bigger shrine at Nathadvara near Udaipur. One of his disciples Krishnadasa managed the temple while another by name Kumbandasa was entrusted with singing songs on Krishna's lilas. After staying at Mathura for sometime Vallabha left for a second pilgrimage.

During his second pilgrimage through Rajasthan and Gujarat he debated with Jain sadhus and Saktas (followers of Vamacara) and taught them that devotion to Krishna alone will give them redemption. As he was fond of child Krishna (Balakrishna) he had a special attachment to young and prankish children. While he was staying in Cutch, the ruler of Sindh approached him to cure his son afflicted with leprosy. Vallabha explained to him that to believe in miracles is an act of foolishness. Krishna's grace alone can confer real happiness. However Vallabha blessed the ruler and his son in the name of God. The boy got cured of his illness.

At Kurukshetra he met a group of scholars who had written commentaries on the Prasthanatraya. He regretted that the *Bhagavata* was not understood by people as an

equally valid Authority. His idea to complete the commentary 'Subodhini' early, became stronger. He travelled through the holy places on the Himalayas and then commenced his tour of Eastern India. At Jagannath (Puri) at the royal court, Vallabha was asked to state in brief his idea of Supreme God, the most holy book and the powerful mantra. Vallabha replied thus:

*ekam sastram devakiputragitam;
eko deva(h) devakiputra eva /
eko mantras tasya namani yani;
karmapyekam tasya devasya seva //*

(The only Sastra is the song (Bhagavad Gita) of Lord Krishna (son of Devaki), the only god is Lord Krishna Himself; the one mantra is nothing but his various names, and the only duty is service to that Lord.)

Thereafter at the age of thirtytwo he settled at Varanasi where his marriage with Mahalakshmi was celebrated.

Vallabha then undertook a third pilgrimage re-visiting the holy places which he had already visited. He spread his Pushti sampradaya - the doctrine of divine grace-during this sojourn and initiated a large number of people in this doctrine. After completing his pilgrimage he settled at Varanasi. His opponents engaged themselves in a war of pamphlets criticising Vallabha's Pushtimarga. Though initially he ignored them, in order to silence them he prepared his replies and hung them near the gate of Viswanatha Temple. This polemic exercise is known as *Patravalambana*. There he criticised Mayavada, upheld his Brahmavada and stressed the

connection between Purva and Uttara Mimasas. He could not bear the distractions caused by the arrogant pundits.

He moved to a place called Adel near Allahabad to continue his writings in a serene atmosphere in the vicinity of Triveni. He spent nearly twenty years here. His first son Gopinath was born in 1511 AD and his second son Vittalnath (bearing the name of Vitobha) was born in 1516 A.D. The elder son died prematurely. It was Vittalnath who gave a thrust to the Pushti marga as he was well tutored by his father. Vittalnath not only attended his father's discourses with sincerity but also learnt the mode of worship. Vittalnath had poetic talents too.

Vallabha's impressive work is *Tattvartha Dipa Nibandha* comprising three parts - *Sastrartha prakarana* (exposition on the nature of Brahman), *Sarva-nirnaya prakarana* (which bares the central idea of the sastras) and *Bhagavatartha prakarana* (detailing the significance of the Bhagavata Purana). He also wrote a gloss 'Prakasa' for the first two parts and a portion of the third part. His *Anu-bashya* is a commentary on Brahmasutra upto III.2.34 and this was completed by Vittalnath. Vallabha continued to write his commentary 'Subodhini' on Bhagavata with the help of a scribe. Owing to the sudden demise of the scribe the writing could not be continued.

Vallabha was feeling restless as he realised that he has been called by God. He was fifty two years old then. He decided to renounce the world. For this he got the consent of his wife, sons and disciples. After instructing his favourite

disciple Damodara dasa (affectionately called Damala) to take care of his family and to guide the sons to continue preaching Pushtimarga, he left his house and got initiated in the Sanyasa asrama by a Dvaita ascetic Madhavendra Puri. Vallabha adopted the name of Pumananda and settled down in a cottage at Hanuman Ghat in Benares. He was particularly interested in chanting Gopika-gitam (Skanda X. Bhagavatam) as it is the depiction of virahabhakti - a supreme form of devotion according to Vallabhacarya.

When the disciples requested for a message from the Acarya, he replied that in the prevailing circumstances people are likely to become utterly worldly, enjoying sensuous pleasures. People should always believe that their God is Krishna and their abject faith in Him will always protect them. It is their duty to remember Him and do service to Him. He wrote down the above message on the sands as He was observing a vow of silence. Immediately Lord Krishna appeared and completed Acarya's message by assuring protection to his devotees at all times. They must adore Him with selflessness and a sense of complete surrender like the Gopis of Vrindavan. They should serve Him with single-pointed devotion without caring for worldly matters. Acharya's message was contained in three and a half verses and Lord Krishna gave His assurance in one and a half verses. These five verses are known as *Sikshasloka*.

Vallabha, in all serenity entered into the Ganges reciting Gopikagitam and Yugalagitam –both from the Bhagavatam. He was all the while in meditation. As soon as Vallabha got into deep waters, a flame lept up lifting him into the

skies. Vallabha was thus graced by Lord Krishna. This incident happened in 1532 A.D. Vallabha left behind his scholarly son Vittalnath who was followed by a large number of scholars, many of whom commented on the works of Vallabha. The places where Vallabha halted during his pilgrimages became seats of Vallabha Sampradaya and are known as *Bhaitaks*.

The Philosophy of Vallabhacharya

Credit should go to Vallabha for including the *Bhagavata* as the fourth Prasthan, the other three being Brahmasutras, Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita. He does not stand alone in having four prasthanas. Ramanuja and Madhva gave the status of a Book of Authority to Ramayana (and also Vishnu Purana) and Mahabharata respectively though they did not call them prasthan. Vallabha respected Bhagavata not because it deals with Bhagavan i.e. Krishna but took the book as Krishna's revelation (*Bhagavataa proktam* as opposed to *Bhagavata(h) idam*). In fact Vallabha reconciles the teachings of the original three prasthanas by having recourse to the *Bhagavata*.

Vallabha's philosophy is Akhanda Brahmanavada as contrasted with the earlier systems - Kevaladvaita of Sankara and Visishtadvaita of Ramanuja. According to Vallabha, Brahman is indivisible and such a knowledge arises in the mind of the seeker seeing Brahman in everything. Vallabhacharya does not often use the term Suddhadvaita to describe his philosophy, which to him was Brahmanavada. Knowledge of the Self removes ignorance whereas the

knowledge of God enables one to understand that the Soul and Brahman are not different. When the knowledge of the Self is assisted by knowledge of God one gets the right knowledge of pure non-dualism or Suddhadvaita. Vittalnath was the person who introduced the term 'Suddhadvaita' to differentiate this system from other systems all of which are Brahnavadas only, to be precise.

Pramanas or Proofs of Knowledge

While Ramanuja accepts *Pratyaksha* (Perception), *Anumana* (Inference) and *Sabda* (Verbal Testimony), Vallabha gives accord to Verbal Testimony only. Under *Sabda-pramana* he brings in Vedas, the Prasthanatraya, the Puranas, the Itihasas, Smrtis and all other works which do not contradict the basic tenets of Suddhadvaita doctrine. According to Vallabha the Vedas including Upanishads are the foundation, the *Bhagavad Gita* the frame work, and the Brahmasutras the full structure, whereas the *Bhagavata* supplies the embellishments. The Bhagavata is the deciding authority. Error is also a form of knowledge; once we know that something is erroneous it provides knowledge.

Knowledge according to Vallabha is classified as Satvic, Rajasic and Tamasic. The last category is a total misconception and non-knowledge. Satvic knowledge is Nirvikalpa or indeterminate as per the school of Nyaya. But Vallabha takes it in the sense that everything is Brahman negating all differences. The Rajasic knowledge is Savikalpa. or determinate exposing differences. Only through Satvic knowledge one can understand the true nature of Brahman.

God is self-existent and beyond Verbal Testimony and hence no other method is needed to prove the existence of God. Brahman is both the material cause (upadana karana) and the efficient cause (nimitta karana). The manifestation of Brahman as different forms is not different from Brahman but identical. Vallabha supports *Avikruta parinama vada* - the doctrine of transformation with no change in essence. As earth exists in a pot, Brahman manifests as world without any change in its essence. Brahman's 'sat' aspect is manifested in the Universe and its 'cit' aspect is present in the Soul but its Ananda aspect is manifested neither in the Universe nor in the Souls.

Brahman has three forms — the Universe (physical form), *Akshara* (the spiritual form) and Krishna (the divine form). These forms are the same as *Kshara*, *Akshara* and *Purushottama*. According to Vallabha even though *Akshara* is a form of God, it is inferior to Krishna who is *Purnapurushottama*. He is the highest form of God as pure Love and Bliss.

There are many derivations for the term Krishna but the most favoured definition is '*Krish*' expressing the sense of 'being' (*bhu*) and '*na*' expressing bliss. The combination means One in whom Being and Bliss are united.

*krishir bhuvacakas sabda (h) nas'ca nirvrtivacaka(h)/
tayloraikyam param brahma Krishna ityabhidhiyatell
(Gopalapurva-tapini Upanishad I.1)*

Vallabha states in his '*Antahkaranaprabodha*' where he addresses his mind 'O mind, hear my words with

attention; there is no God other than Krishna free from defects.' To Vallabha there is no God higher than Krishna. (*Krishnastu bhagavan svayam*). He is Love and Bliss and is to be realised by devotees through love only. Such a devotee must give up everything worldly, for the sake of Krishna and sustain himself through love of Him.

Jagat and Samsara, the constituents of the Universe

According to Vallabha, Jagat (world) and Samsara—the World of (personal) ego are not identical. The Jagat being the manifestation of God is real having been caused by His power (Maya). (This view may be contrasted with Ramanuja's interpretation of Maya as *Sankalpajnanam*). The Samsara comes to an end when Knowledge destroys Ignorance. But the World remains but is destroyed — rather withdrawn into Himself—by God. This is God's Lila or sport. In this sense every object is divine and mundane simultaneously. There is God-ness in a jar and jarness in God. The jar serves its purpose because God has willed so. This is *avirbhava sakti*. The jar-ness in God is the result of *tirobhava sakti*.

Vallabha believes that Souls are many and they are parts (amsa-s) of God through Consciousness (Cit) and Being (Sat). But the Ananda of Brahman is dormant. In these senses they differ from the Universe. The Souls are knowers (Jnata) and also doers (Karta) and enjoyers of fruits (Bhokta). They are of the form of Knowledge (Jnanasvarupa). The doership (Kartrva) is at the control of God. Like sparks

from fire, the souls are parts of God but the experiences of the souls do not affect God.

Pushti-marga

The souls fall into four categories, according to Vallabha. They are *Pravahi*, *Maryada*, *Pushti* and *Carshani*

- (1) **Pravahi** souls are forgetful of their relationship with God, and are attached to worldly happiness. They have no higher goal.
- (2) The **Maryada** souls are souls that are conscious of their relationship with God, and by the performance of Karma, Jnana and Bhakti try to get out of Samsara and attain liberation.
- (3) The **Pushti** souls belong to the noblest category as they vehemently shun worldly pleasures and yearn for the Love and Grace of God. They may seek grace but it is purely the will of God to shower His grace on the chosen few. Pushti means nourishment. God nourishes the favoured souls in such a manner that they realise absolute Divine Bliss. Vallabha relies on the famous passage in Kathopanishad –1.2.23 (*nayamatma pravacanena labhyo na medhaya na bahuna srutena/ yam eva esha vmute tena labhya(h) tasya esha atma vivrunute tanum svam/*)
- (4) There is one more group of souls which Vallabha names as *Carshani*. They are wanderers and are ever confused in their thinking.

The Pushti souls emanate from the Bliss aspect of God. The Maryada souls emanate from His Speech (i.e his revelation) and the Pravahi souls from the mind or will of God. The Maryada souls adopt Vedic karmas and go by Vedic injunctions. In other words they have respect for God and His injunctions and conduct themselves in a manner prescribed by the codes of the religious texts. On getting liberated they merge with the Akshara form of Brahman.

The Pushti souls are deeply involved in divine service out of love for the Lord. According to Vallabha, Bhagavat Puja is a selfish method and the ideal self-effacing method is Seva. Bhakti as a sadhana practised observing rules, falls under Maryada Bhakti. Here the guideline is '*yavat sadhanam phalam*'. The reward is commensurate with the force and weight of Sadhana. Vallabha assigns his own name to moksha and that is *Uddhara* (Bh.G.VI.5) which means 'lifting up' or 'getting lifted upwards.' This 'Uddhara' is possible only through the grace of Sri Krishna and from the point of view of the soul, this grace is unpredictable and beyond reasoning and descends on the chosen souls through His '*iccha*' and '*sakti*'. The reader may refer to the passage from Kathopanishad mentioned earlier.

When Bhakti occurs through Sri Krishna's grace it is Pushti Bhakti which is more rewarding than Maryada Bhakti. By following the nine steps like sravanam, kirtanam etc. one's mind gets fixed on the Lord. Here Vallabha feels that in the last step atma-nivedanam the earlier eight steps are compressed. There are four stages of Bhakti. *Prema*, *Sneha*, *Asakti* and *Vyasana*. In the beginning it is mere

considered Prapatti (ref. Sadhanaprakaranam-48-extract from Tattvarthadipa-nibandha-259). But Vallabha has a firm idea of Prapatti with its six angas as handled by Ramanuja School. But to tailor it to suit to his concept of Madhura – bhakti (based on lover-beloved relationship), he replaces the term '*goptrutva*' by '*bhartrutva*'. The other five angas are more or less the same. (*anukulyasya sankalpa(h)*, *pratikulyasya varjanam/ Rakshishyati iti visvasa(h)*, *bhartrutva varanam tatha// atma-nikshepa karpanye*, *shadvidha saranagati(h)* (ref. Pancasloki-4&5). Vallabha calls this kind of Prapatti as Pushti-prapatti.

Suddhadvaita in practice:

Acarya plays an important role in disciplining a devotee. In the Suddhadvaita sampradaya acaryas are known as Maharaj-s. They need not be Sanyasis. They are householders learned in Scriptures and the texts of the Sampradaya. Excepting Vallabha no other acarya in his line seems to have become renouncers. *Bhaktivardhini*, a small but important work by Vallabha stresses that Bhakti practised as a householder with a sense of renunciation and with deep love for Krishna is the most effective method. Although '*Sri Krishna(h) Saranam mama*' an eight-lettered mantra is generally prescribed for all the followers, a special initiation known as 'Brahmasambandha' is a must for every aspirant of Krishna grace. By this Brahmasambandha initiated by the acarya representing Vallabhacarya, one supplicates to the Lord leaving aside his '*ahanta*' (ego) through mental, (*Manasi*) physical (*Tanuja*) service as well as by using his resources (*vittaja seva*). A true follower of this Sampradaya

It is to be noted that Krishna worship in this Sampradaya is basically a worship of Krishna as a child. During Rasalila, Krishna is considered to be less than twelve years old. It is said that Vallabha worshipped ten forms of Krishna even though his favourite form is Srinathji. When the mantle of an acarya fell on Sri Vittalnath he had with him seven different idols of Krishna. Vittalnath had seven sons and each son inherited a form. These forms are Mathuradasa, Vittalnath, Dwarkadisa, Gokuladisa, Gokula Candramaji, Balakrishna (Mukundaraiji and Harikrishnaraiji are two other forms which are matters of choice) and Madanmohanji.

During the time of Vallabha and that of his son Vittalnath there were eight poet-singers who were singing the glory of Krishna. Many of those songs are sung in the presence of the Lord and these poets are known as Ashtachaap or Ashtasakha. Vallabha introduced the system of singing the songs of Surdas, Paramanand Das, Kumbhandas and Krishnadas by themselves in the abode of Krishna. These four were the disciples of Vallabha. Nandadas, Govindaswami, Citaswami and Caturbhujdas were the disciples of Vittalnath. The songs, as they are sung in the presence of the deity, are called Temple songs or Haveligita. Surdas, born blind, was a follower of Vallabha and a great devotee of Krishna. Akbar and Tansen had a great regard

for some of these poet-singers. Many of the followers of Vallabha sampradaya hail from the merchant community of Gujarat, and Rajasthan.

The worship of Krishna in His different aspects is sure to draw everyone's admiration as the food offered and clothings and ornaments not only vary from season to season but suits the particular season. Vallabha has commanded that a true follower of his sampradaya should not partake of any food that has not been offered to Sri Krishna. Everything is Krishnaprasada. It goes without saying that it is strict vegetarianism that is being practiced. Even though cow is sacred for every Hindu, the animal is highly revered as it is always associated with Krishna. Vallabha's writings supported the Bhakti cult to the extent that his philosophy of Suddhadvaita looks like a hand-maid of Bhakti. Philosophy is governed by certain rules whereas Bhakti based on Raga or Rati supersedes these rules. Krishna's leela with Gopis is just a symbolical representation of the Soul's god-experience. The idea of physical or carnal love is to be totally dispensed with. It is quite unconvincing to accept the view of some scholars that Vallabha's philosophy is Rudra sampradaya.

Vallabha's attitude to life

Vallabha felt that everyone should do his duty assigned to him by virtue of his birth. This does not mean that one class of people is higher than another class. According to him that class which serves the society is worthy of admiration and recognition. The classification based on the

social order is welcome but division of people on the basis of so many castes is reprehensible. It is the involvement of the people in the spiritual progress that matters most. He threw open the doors to Krishnabhakti to everyone. At the lifetime of Vallabha's son, Vittalnath several Muslims became his disciples. Rasakhana popularly known as 'Raskhan' was a great devotee of Krishna and a favourite of Vittalnath. A painter by name Honhar drew the portrait of Vallabhacarya in the manner of discoursing on Bhagavata, at the command of Sikander Lodi, an admirer of Vallabhacarya probably in the year 1511 A.D.

Vallabhacarya encouraged art and aesthetics and as an appreciation of these, raised the level of the tastes of the devotees enabling them to enjoy the love and loveliness of Krishna. Krishna's lilas painted on canvas called 'Pichawais', colourful 'Artis' - offering of small lamps surrounded by pearls and designs in colour and stringing of fragrant and colourful seasonal flowers by the devotees themselves to be offered to Balakrishna are still in practice in this Sampradaya. The mood of devotion exhibited in the regimen of worship in this Sampraaya is worthy of admiration.

The Works of Vallabhacharya

Let us now take a brief survey of his works.

1. **Anu Bhashya:** It is a commentary on the Brahmasutras. Vallabha seems to have named it as *Tattva-Sutra- Bhashya*. His successors seem to have called it by the name Anu Bhashya. This name implies that he wrote a Brhad-Bhashya. The original bhashya from the hands of Vallabha stops with III.2.43. The remaining portion was written by his son Vittalnath.

2. **Tattvartha - Dīpa - Nibandha:** This work contains three parts: *Saṣṭartha Prakaraṇa* (dealing with the *Gīta*), *Sarvaṇimaya prakaraṇa* (discussing the various schools of Indian Philosophy), and *Bhagavatartha Prakaraṇa* (explaining the central concept of the *Bhagavata*). Vallabha added a gloss by name 'Prakasa'.
3. **Subodhini:** This is a commentary on the *Bhagavata* on the first, second, third and tenth skandhas and a part of eleventh skandha. The commentary explains the significance of each word of the slokas.
4. **Patraṇvalābhaṇam:** Already explained while dealing with the life-history of Vallabha.
5. **Jaiminiśūtra-bhāṣya:** This work is incomplete and the purpose of writing this bhāṣya is to stress that *Purva Mimamsa* and *Uttara Mimamsa* are inter-connected works.
6. **Shodasa-granthas:** These are minor works of Vallabha numbering sixteen in sloka form. They disseminate the central tenets of his philosophy. Some important works alone are briefly explained here. **Puṣṭi-pravāha mārṇyada** with occasional breaks, analyses his concept of the four types of souls- *Puṣṭi*, *Pravāha*, *Mārṇyada* and *Carṣṇaṇi*. **Bhaktivardhini** gives a beautiful analysis of his concept of *Bhakti*. **Saṇyasaṇirṇaya** discusses the nature of renunciation as deemed by Vallabha. In his **Jalābheda** through the analogy on various resources of water he categorises the Discourers. The work draws its inspiration from

a passage from the *Taittiriya Samhita* (VII..4.12). The discipline to be observed by a follower of Pushtimarga is explained in detail in *Sadhanaprakarana* which is an extract from Vallabha's *Tattvarthadipanibandha*. In the *Viveka dhairyasraya* Vallabha stresses that a devotee should acquire Viveka and Dhairya which condition his mind before resorting to Krishna. (The terms 'Viveka and Dhairya' have a special significance).

7. **Madhurashtakam:** This is a famous poem of eight slokas bringing out the supreme beauty of Krishna. Every limb and every action of Krishna is considered as sweetness itself.

Vallabha's philosophy is a landmark in the whole of Indian Philosophy both from the point of view of Religion as well as that of Metaphysics—the two sides of Indian Philosophy.

SRI CAITANYA MAHA PRABHU

The language of love and Devotion found a full expression in the philosophy of Sri Caitana who is hailed as Mahaprabhu. Because of the incomparable intensity of his devotion to Krishna he is popularly known as Sri Krishna Caitanya when he took up sanyasa. The entire North India was overtaken by Krishnabhakti thanks to the bard of Puri Jagannath, Jayadeva, whose devotional poem called Gitagovindam or Ashtapadi has acquired a great popularity throughout India. These songs were sung accompanied by the dance of his wife Padmavati in the presence of Lord Jagannath. Bengal, however, remained a little aloof, with the ordinary people singing the glory of Mangala - Candi or Manasa goddesses associated with popular legends. Even the so called upper caste religious men and even Sanyasis were only outwardly religious. Pursuit of wordly happiness was the only aim. This was the condition of Navadvipa, a place well known as the prime seat of Navya-nyaya (neo-logic) where Caitanya was born in the year 1485 A.D. as the tenth child for his parents. His childhood name was Visvambhar and acquired a nick-name Nimai. He was also called Gauranga because of his fair complexion.

Being a scholar himself, Caitanya started his life as a teacher par excellence. But he did not rise up to the level of

a reformer or a spiritual teacher. When he went to Gaya, he met an Advaitic Sanyasi, Isvara Puri who initiated him into Krishnabhakti. Caitanya practically became a recluse but was persuaded by his friends to come back and live with his aged mother and loving wife. He often got into trance and shed tears experiencing intense pangs of separation from Krishna. At this point of time Caitanya realised that the only reward in this life is to experience the joy of being one with Krishna and that all other forms of worldly pleasure are equal to tinsel.

He disbanded his teaching centre and plunged into Namasankirtana attracting a large number of followers. He had left his stamp as a scholar by writing a book on Sanskrit Grammar. Caitanya became a god-intoxicated man converting a large number of people to his way of realising supra-mundane joy through singing the various names of Lord Hari.

At the age of twentyfour he became an ascetic receiving initiation from one Kesava Bharati. He travelled extensively singing the lilas of Krishna from Vrindavan to Rameswaram. Two renowned Advaitic scholars, Prakasanada Saraswati of Benares and Vasudeva Sarvabhauma of Puri became disciples of Caitanya along with a large number of their followers. Two high officials of Hussain Shah, the then ruler of Bengal, Rupa and Sanatana who were also brothers and who later on became ascetics assuming the name of Rupa Goswami and Sanatana Goswami became the ardent disciples of Caitanya. He synthesized Love and Knowledge both in his personal life

as well as in his teachings. All the same he had a dual personality. In the normal state of consciousness he was a lover and Krishna was his beloved. While he was in the divine absorption or Samadhi, he, having lost the consciousness of the other world, became one with God. Very often Caitanya was alternating between these two states.

Caitanya spent the last eighteen years of his life at Puri, the fountain head of Krishna bhakti and Radhakrishna cult. He visited Vrindavan, the place hallowed by the sports of Krishna with the gopas and gopikas. By his visit Vrindavan acquired a unique prominence. Not only Vrindavan but also its surrounding areas became famous places of pilgrimage. Till the advent of Sri Vallabhacharya and his disciples Vrindavan was a centre of Bengal Vaishnavism. The essence of Bengal Vaishnavism is the Radha Krishna cult. Caitanya imbibed the essence of this cult and this was nourished to a very great extent by Rupa Goswami, Sanatana Goswami and Jiva Goswami who provided a philosophical basis to what was an emotional approach.

A meeting between Caitanya and Vallabha seems to have taken place but there is no reference to their interaction. Sankara Deva of Assam who was a worshipper of Sakti (in fact before Sankara Deva, Sakti worship was widely prevalent in Assam) undertook a pilgrimage of all the important religious centres of his time. He was impressed by the role of Vaishnavism in effacing the differences among the common people through congregational prayer accompanied by Sankirtan. When Sankara Deva visited Puri in connection

with the 'rathayatra', he chanced to see Caitanya deeply engrossed in ecstatic meditation. Sankara Deva became aware of the adoration that Caitanya enjoyed among the people of Orissa. After returning home, he chanced to meet a roaming scholar who explained the Bhagavata Purana. Sankara Deva got so impressed with the Bhagavata Purana that he came out of the hold of Sakti cult and translated the tenth skanda of the Purana in the Kamarupi dialect. Sankara Deva thus became a Vaishnavite reformer after his meeting Caitanya. He gave importance to 'dasya bhakti' and stressed that salvation can be achieved only through surrender, guided by the Bhagavad Gita text '*Mamekam saranam vraja*'. Sankara Deva's Vaishnavism, is therefore called 'ekasaraniya dharma'.

Sri Caitanya's earthly journey came to an end in 1533 A.D but his teachings survive even today. Rupa Goswami and Sanatana Goswami predeceased Caitanya. Yet a host of Vaishnava teachers of Vrindavan continued to spread what Caitanya preached.

Even though Caitanya who swore by the *Bhagavata*, did not write any book detailing His concept of Krishnabhakti, his disciples wrote brilliant works incorporating Caitanya's contribution. The *Bhaktirasamrtasindhu* and *Ujjvalanilamani* by Rupa Goswami, and glosses on the *Bhagavata* by Sanatana Goswami and Jiva Goswami are some noteworthy works in Caitanya Sampradaya. *Sri Caitanya Caritamrta* by one Krishnadasa Kaviraja conveys the essence of all the works of the Goswamis. Long after these scholar-devotees, one Baladeva wrote a commentary on

the *Brahmasutras* inspired by Caitanya Sampradaya and this commentary is known as Govindabhashya.

Acintya bheda-abheda vada of Caitanya school

Indian philosophical pursuit is mainly directed towards the relationship between Jiva and Brahman. Abheda, Bheda, and Bhedabheda are the main approaches. Sankara advocated abheda; Ramanuja a kind of bheda in abheda; Madhva, only bheda and Bhaskara and Yadava dwell upon bhedabheda. The followers of Caitanya voice a new relationship of Acintya-bhedabheda (the difference as well as non-difference between Jiva and Brahman are indefinable) in the following manner.

- (1) The Jiva and Brahman are abhinna as both fall under the category of Cit but at the same time they are bhinna because Brahman is all—pervasive (vibhu) Cit, while Jiva is anu-cit—a minute form of consciousness.
- (2) Brahman is omniscient while Jiva borders on ignorance - with very little Knowledge.
- (3) Brahman is the creator and above maya or bondage while jiva is the created and is in bondage. Jiva is an aspect (amsa) of Brahman while Brahman is whole (amsin). It is His jiva-sakti that sustains the Jiva and His maya-sakti sustains the Universe. According to Caitanya there are only two classes of souls – *Nityamukta* (eternally liberated) and *Baddha* (under bondage). While the former class serves Krishna deriving the joy of loving service, the latter class may get liberated in course of time through devotion. The various abodes of Brahman (Krishna) along with His

multifarious svarupas and attendants indicate His *svarupa-sakti*. Thus Brahman is possessed of the three saktis viz., *jiva-sakti*, *maya-sakti* and *svarupa-sakti*. The relationship between Brahman and these saktis is that which exists between *sakti* and *saktimat* (or *saktiman*). Are these two different from each other or one and the same? Caitanyites cite a passage from Svetesvataropanishad. “*para asya saktir vividhaiva srutyate; svabhaviki jnana-bala-kriya ca*”. The saktis are natural and in-built (Svabhaviki) in Brahman. Brahman falls down from Its status if the saktis could be separated from It. Inseparability is the essence of holding sakti. The pleasant odour can not be separated from musk. So also heat cannot be separated from fire. Musk and fire are to be considered as possessing sakti of odour and heat. A red hot iron rod gives heat for a while. The heat does not remain for ever. So fire is not the sakti of iron rod. (c.f. Pillailokacarya’s aphorism: Tirumantrom. 45. (The Goddess is conjoined with the Lord like the brilliance and its possessor and like the flower and its fragrance (Thus there is no separate existence) So far about the non-difference (abheda).

The musk and odour may not be different from each other outwardly. The reality is that they co-exist., When one experiences the fragrance at a distance without seeing the musk the difference between the two becomes apparent. If they are considered as a single entity for the sake of argument then by the issuance of odour, the musk must lose its weight. It does not happen. Ananda and the Saktis

are the inherent qualities of Brahman. These can be experienced when one has the experience of Brahman. The difference between Brahman and his Sakti can also be experienced. For example His sakti i.e. grace can be realised even without realising Brahman.

The relation between 'sakti' and 'saktimat' is somewhat baffling and defies reasoning and explanation. Sugar is sweet, neem is bitter; why should they be so? Poison has the power to kill while milk does not have that power. Why? When we cannot account for these 'why-s' we have to admit that it is beyond the ken of knowledge (acintya-jnana) The Caitanyites quote a passage from Vishnu Purana in support of acintyajnana. - '*saktaya(h) sarvabhavanam acintya-jnana gocara(h)..... Bhavanti tapatam sreshta pavakasya yathoshnata// (l.3.2).*

It is very difficult to reconcile either the difference or the non-difference between 'sakti' and 'saktimat'. We have only to admit that there is simultaneous difference and non-difference. Jivagoswami defines the concept in a simple manner as an incapacity to consider under the category of either difference or non-difference. (*Bhinnabhinnatvadi vikalpai(h) cintayitum asakta(h)*). This is the crux of the Acintyabhedabheda philosophy of Caitanya.

Caitanya's Philosophy of Love

Caitanya did not believe in the hair-splitting philosophical discussions (these were left to his followers) dealing with God and the relationship that the Soul and the Universe have with Him. Brahman, according to Caitanya,

is that which is supremely great in every aspect. Brahman, is eternal, infinite and all-pervading (*vibhu*). The powers and attributes of Brahman are real, infinite and magnificent. That Brahman is Krishna. All other deities like Vishnu, Narayana and Siva are His amsas. Though they are also infinite, eternal and all-pervading, their powers and attributes are much inferior to those of Krishna. While these deities are Krishna's own aspects (*Svamsa*), the Jivas are also His aspects but diverse (*Vibhinnamsa*). Of Brahman's other saktis three are important and they are Svarupa sakti, Maya sakti and Jiva sakti. Svarupa sakti is his Cit - sakti. Maya - sakti is Jada and it can not function without the influence of Svarupa - sakti which is superior to the other two. Jiva-sakti, otherwise known as Tatastha sakti is the source of all beings.

As the saktis of Brahman are inextricably associated with Him, He is to be considered Saguna. He is also Nirguna as He does not derive any guna through Maya sakti. Brahman or Krishna is synonymous with Ananda while Sat and Cit are His attributes. Brahman being Ananda or Bliss, He is always sweet and attractive. Hence He is called Krishna which term means 'the Universal Attractor' (The Sanskrit root '*Karsh*' mean to pull or attract'). His *Svarupasakti* has three components (1) *Sandhini* - Cause of His own existence and of others. (2) *Samvit* - the cause of knowledge, and (3) *Hladini* - the cause of His own enjoyment and of others. By this Hladini Sakti He becomes highly relishable and makes others relish Him. This is the starting point of Bhakti.

Krishna as an '*avatara*' assuming human body and indulging in human activities is still infinite and all - pervasive.

This form is *aprakṛta*, ever youthful and charming. Being Himself Rasa (*Raso vai sa(h)*- Taittiriya Upanishad). He is most relishable and at the same time He relishes His lilas along with His associates either in the form of Krishna, Vishnu or Narayana.

Krishna's abode is Vrindavana or Gokula whereas Narayana's abode is Vaikuntha. Caitanya seems to equate these two places for the people well conditioned through singular devotion. According to Caitanya, these two abodes are equally supremely blissful. *Ujjvalanilamani* of Rupa Goswami defines the love of Gopis for Krishna as supra - mundane and transcendental. Krishna's lilas have two aspects - *avyakta* and *vyakta*. The *avyakta*-lila can be relished by a disciplined devotee mentally. In this state the Gopis are considered the wives of Krishna. But in the *vyakta* state the Gopis lead independent lives but their love for Krishna and their sporting with Him do not involve any kind of physical relationship. From Caitanya's view-point as expatiated by his disciples, the Gopis are only Krishna's saktis.

Caitanya recognises several Isvaras but Krishna is Sarvesvara. In Vaikuntha, where Krishna appears as Narayana, his *aisvarya* (supreme masterhood) predominates over *madhurya* (Sweetness) and thus it is a hindrance to loving service. In Dwaraka and Mathura which are also Krishna's *dhama*-s (dwelling places), even though *aisvarya* and *madhurya* are in equal proportion, sometimes the former tends to suppress the latter. For example when mountain

Govardhana was lifted effortlessly by the young Krishna, the Gopas were for a while overawed by Krishna's unique feat and wondered whether Krishna was different from them. Krishna had to console them saying that he is one among them. Thereafter the gopas forgot Krishna's godhood. But in Vrindavana Krishna's madhurya predominates over His aisvarya to the extent that madhurya completely envelops aiswarya, and this is the reason that Krishna and the uninitiated gopas and gopikas enjoyed bliss in each other's company. Here the feeling that 'Krishna is mine' is uppermost, while in Vaikuntha the feeling is 'I belong to Krishna'.

When one practises devotion he must start with Sadhana bhakti through the nine forms of devotion as recommended in the *Bhagavata*. (1) *Sravanam* (2) *Kirtanam* (3) *Smaranam* (4) *Padasevanam* (5) *Arcanam* (6) *Vandanam* (7) *Dasyam* (8) *Sakhyam* (9) *Atmanivedanam*. Caitanya gives importance to Japa as a sure means to spiritual perfection. In this situation the divine love manifests in the heart of the devotee. The intensity of devotion is of five grades.

Santa bhava: It is a stage of stillness of mind and of peace. The devotee acquires a state of tranquility and feels that he is nearing God. But the relationship between the two is somewhat vague.

Dasya bhava: The devotee feels that he is a devoted servant treating God as his master. Here there is the sense of lowliness on the part of the aspirant and hence he cannot acquire an intimate relationship.

Vatsalya bhava: Krishna now becomes a child to be fondled by the devotee. He has to take care of God now! Like Nandagopa and Yasoda who are neither the real parents of Krishna nor Krishna is an ordinary human child. But both the foster parents and child Krishna believed like ordinary parents and their off-spring. Krishna even let himself to be punished by Yasoda. In this state the devotee develops an overwhelming affection for the Lord. Even if the Lord fails to grace him, his affection for Him does not diminish a wee bit.

Kanta bhava or Madhura Bhava: This attitude is considered as the sweetest not only by Caitanya but also by his younger contemporary Vallabha. More than the parental affection which is self-effacing, the lover-beloved relationship is not only sweeter but also free from mental restriction born of fear or respect. All the elements of love, like selflessness, friendship, admiration and attachment are found in this bhava. (Vallabha would go further and say that viraha bhakti born of madhura bhakti is superior) Caitanya sometimes considered himself as Radha and the Lord as his consort. The followers of Caitanya however consider Caitanya as a combination of Krishna and Radha. The ecstasy of Radha over Krishna influences Him to enjoy his own charms and lilas that drove Radha mad after Him. This is the reason why Caitanyites consider the mood of Radha

as *mahabhava*. It is customary for the followers of Caitanya to first worship him and his associates before worshipping Krishna for the Caitanyaitees feel that Caitanya is symbolic of the union of Radha and Krishna.

Salvation and the means of attaining it

The foremost requisite for salvation is *smarana* or the incessant remembrance of Krishna (cf. Ramanuja's recommendation of *dhyana* defining it as an unbroken remembrance like the flow of oil (*'tailadharavad avicchinna-smrti-santana rupa*). The goal of a Caitanyite being service to Krishna as if He is in Vrindavana, he must adopt one of the above mentioned five *bhavas* that suits him. The *madhura bhava* should be the aim. To discipline himself, a devotee must try to first condition his mind by—

- (1) keeping company with Krishnabhaktas so that a conducive atmosphere is created by hearing and discussing the lilas of Krishna.
- (2) doing japa or chanting the name of Krishna.
- (3) listening to the narration of Krishna's childhood deeds. (It is worth noticing here that although all the propounders of the Bhakti school revere Bhagavad Gita as the supreme authority, they regard child Krishna and not the author of Bhagavad Gita as most appropriate to cultivate the devotion based on love and not awe and admiration for a superior)
- (4) staying in Krishna's play- resort, Vrindavana at least mentally if not physically, and

- (5) worshipping the image of Krishna as if the image is Krishna Himself.

(The views of Ramanuja and those of his successors on the observances that a true Vaishnava should follow, have percolated in the entire continent with minor variations)

Humility, freedom from lust and jealousy, kindness towards all beings, contentment and a sense of equipoise- in brief all the requirements of a devotee enlisted in the Chapter XII of the *Bhagavad Gita* - are all the pre-requisites. Non-vegetarian stuff or food prepared by non-vaishnavas are taboo for Caitanyites.

Rati, Prema, Sneha, Maana, Pranaya, Raga and Anuraga are different degrees of loving devotion in the ascending order. Anuraga leads to Mahabhava which is the ecstasy that the gopas and Radha experienced and which every aspirant must try to experience himself. While a Santa bhakta is eligible to be in Vaikuntha the abode of Narayana the others practising other bhavas starting with sneha enjoy the bliss of Krishna at Vrindavana. This does not mean that Vaikuntha is superior and Vrindavana inferior but should be taken to mean Krishna as a godhead far above and as Krishna being one among us.

As there are different degrees of devotion there are also different levels of salvations. The latter are five in number (1) *sarshti* - having powers similar to those of Narayana (2) *sarupya* - having a form similar to Him (3) *salokya* - residing in Vaikuntha, the abode of Narayana (4) *samipya*- having a privilege to live close to Narayana (5)

sayujya - merging with Brahman (applies to non-dualists)
The Caitanya school accepts the first four, each one appropriate to the degree of devotion but rejects *sayujya*. The Caitanyites believe there is no joy in getting merged with Brahman - in fact there is no separate entity to enjoy Brahman. They are interested in Madhura Bhakti and Madhurya bhava attainable here and now, if one can transform himself as a lover or beloved of Krishna in the imaginary Vrindavan. This state of enjoyment is called as *Prapti* by the Caitanya School. Even in this state a liberated person, in essence, the one who is enjoying the unmixed joy of being in the presence of Krishna - should behave like a gopi enjoying the sports of Krishna and Radha. He cannot directly participate in the sportive joys but he must be subordinate to Rupamanjari, chief among Radha's attendants who are all called Manjaris. The mukta is a passive spectator still enjoying the Bliss of Radha-Krishna combination in full. This position of Caitanya is understandable as he does not recognise *sayujya* in the strict sense of the term.

Caitanya's contribution in spreading the Bhakti cult.

Before the advent of Caitanya, Bengal was in a state of religious turbulence. The Intellectuals did not lead the common man who were worshipping lesser deities but were leading a purely materialistic life. The Caitanyities rightly called them *Pashandis* (Agnostics). The songs of Vidyapati and the *padavalis* of Jayadeva supported the Radha-Krishna cult, but only a few came to embrace it. One Isvara Puri, though an Advaita sanyasi had Vaishnavite leanings and

luckily Caitanya came under his influence. Caitanya interpreted knowledge as love for Krishna-a synonym for Beauty and Bliss. He organised mass-singing of simple songs on Krishna to the accompaniment of musical instruments.

In his earlier life, Caitanya himself participated in Krishna-dramas and his disciples Rupa Goswami and Jiva Goswami wrote Krishna-dramas with a profound mass appeal.

The Kirtana tradition of Bengal owes its origin to Caitanya and he popularised his Religion of Love through these kirtanas. It is believed that a kind of cheap drum and cymbals (the cheap and lighter ones and not the heavy bronze ones which are more ancient) are the inventions of Caitanya so that even the poorest of the poor can afford them. Even today the followers of Caitanya School are popularising the Krishna theme through simple songs attended by ecstatic dance.

Caitanya though not physically present now, is recognised as a living legend.

SRI SANKARA DEVA

Sankara Deva who, after a visit to Bengal, was impressed by Chaitanya's popularity among the masses, through group singing and prayer addressed to Radha and Krishna started his own School of Vaishnavism and Kamarupa (comprising Assam and part of eastern Bengal).

However it was a tough job for Sankara Deva. The empire of Kamarupa which was ruled by Hindu kings and which boasted of huge temples dedicated to Hindu Gods and Goddesses was overtaken by Buddhist Tantriks, Sahjiyas (an indisciplined and a moral sect divided as Vaishnawas and Buddhists) and the (Nathas) (an unorthodox sect which has lost its identity now). The Buddhists brought the Assamese tribals under their influence.

Sankara Deva was born to Kusumbara, a Kayastha by caste by his first wife Sathyanandha in a village called Ali-Pukhuri in Nowgong District. Even though the year of his death is known as 1568 A.D. the date of his birth is a matter of conjecture. He is believed to have had a long life. Based on certain external evidences his year of birth could be vaguely determined as 1486 A.D.

Before he attained the age of seven he lost both his parents and was brought up by his grand parents who gave

him a sound education in Sanskrit. He was proficient as a poet, a painter and a musician. At the age of nineteen Sankara Deva moved to a village not very far from Nowgong where, after two years (at the age of twentyone) he got married and fathered a girl child. His wife, however died shortly afterwards.

Sankara Deva commenced a hectic pilgrimage at the age of thirtythree. The pilgrimage which lasted for twelve years took him to almost all holy centres in the North like Gaya, Kasi, Badarikasrama, Puri, Vrindavan, Mathura, Dwaraka and Rameswaram in the South. As travel, be it with a secular, pleasure-seeking motive or with a religious motive - makes a man wiser, Sankara Deva too realized that something must be done to wean away people from hideous tantrik practices and profane activities in the name of religion. He saw for himself how Vaishnavism having a powerful emotional appeal united people of all strata through congregational prayer and soul-stirring songs. Songs of Vidyapati and Jayadeva were filling the air in and around Vrindavan. At Puri, Sankara Deva while witnessing the Ratha Yathra Festival had an occasion to have a look at Sri Caitanya but they did not meet and converse with each other. But Sankara Deva was highly impressed by Caitanya's popularity among the masses through mass - singing in praise of Lord Krishna. Sankara Deva returned home with his mind full of new ideas.

He married again under pressure from his relatives but all the same his mind was restive and confused. Fortunately, a wandering mendicant of great learning by

name Jagadisa Misra visited Sankara Deva in his native home Bardowa and staying with him discoursed on Bhagavata Purana. This was a turning point in his life. He refrained from his ancestral Sakta practices and started adopting Bhagavata Purana as his sole guidance. He translated the tenth book (*Dasamaskanda*) into Kamarupi dialect. He handled the sports of Krishna in simple verses adapted to easy singing and in fact he himself started singing them along with his friends. This type of Kirtana attracted the common man. Because of political unrest he migrated to Ahom territory shifting his stay from place to place.

Even though Hinduism was the religion of the people, it was influenced by Buddhist Tantrik practices. So Sankara Deva without arousing the suspicion of people around him made a wooden idol of Krishna, named it as Madana Gopala and installed it in his prayer house with elaborate ceremonies. He gave initiation to his followers and this initiation ceremony was called 'Sarana' divided into three categories 'Nama Sarana', 'Guru Sarana', and 'Bhakta Sarana' on par with the three Sarana proclamations of the Buddhists (*Dharmam Saranam, Baddham Saranam, Sangam Saranam*). The prayer house where people gathered was called 'Nama-ghar' This plan worked well and several people joined him in the mission of propagating the new experience. As the movement was about to settle down, the people who neglected their duty in elephant-catching exercise were arrested by the Ahom ruler. Sankara Deva escaped by sailing the Brahmaputra by boat along with his family members and some followers. Some of his followers however could not

escape from the royal punishment.

Sankara Deva settled at Barpeta which was more or less his headquarters. He translated the Bhagavata and also composed small dramas and songs. All sorts of people joined his mission. Muslims and low caste Hindus came to him. He had no hesitation in making some of the low class Hindus as high priests. The situation demanded a different arrangement. Instead of the idol of Lord Krishna which required Brahmin priests' service, Sankara Deva placed a holy book (the Bhagavata) on a pedestal in the prayer house and all men irrespective of caste were permitted to join in the worship. Brahmin priests complained to the king of Koc saying that Sankara Deva was against idol-worship. After a formal enquiry in which Sankara Deva exhibited his eloquence and knowledge, the king not only approved of Sankara Deva's conduct but also gave him a position in his court. Thus Cooch Behar became his second headquarters. He undertook a second pilgrimage. After returning home he wrote a Drama on Sita's Marriage with Rama and also enacted in it. Before he could complete the translation of Bhagavata he died in 1568 A.D.

Philosophy and Sankara Deva

Sankara Deva was a votary of Bhakti cult and the Bhagavad Gita and the Bhagavata were revered by him as the greatest authorities. He has not utilised Brahma Sutras or any other holy texts to propound his theory which evolved by practice by the followers. He did not author any book exclusively for propagating his views. His *Bhaktiratnakara*

written in Sanskrit is more or less a digest. There he maintains that Jiva and Brahman are one but perceived differently through ignorance (Ajnana). He refutes duality by stressing that God transcending Maya (nescience) exists in every creation of his. The apparent difference is only in name and form like the difference between a lump of gold and gold ornaments. This knowledge is natural to anyone but it is not necessary for one who seeks joy through devotion to one God pervading the entire Universe. This philosophy is revealed in his *Bar-gits* (great songs) which have a philosophical import.

Sankara Deva's *Kirtana* begins with a prayer to Sanatana Brahman who assumes a form and becomes the cause of all incarnations. He is variously called Purushottama, Paramaesvara and Narayana and these are identical with Vasudeva or Krishna, the son of Nandagopa and Yasoda. He is in the heart of every creature and is the origin for Jivas and the Universe. He is Purusha. Here comes the counter - part Prakriti, but according to Sankara Deva Paramesvara Narayana is upholding Purusha and Prakriti. Purusha has two forms *Kshara* the perishable Jiva and *Akshara* the immutable Brahman. Sankara Deva's disciple however says that *Kshara* means the visible body and *Akshara* indicates the unmanifest Brahman but Hari known as Purushottama is greater and higher than both.

Sankara Deva equates Krishna with supreme Brahman. The Bhagavata (XI-5.32-34) while stressing the efficacy of Kirtana in this Kali age as equal to that of a yajna

[*Yagnai(h) Sankirtanapraayi(h) yajanti hi sumedhasa(h)*] when addressed to Krishna and Rama, speaks of them as Mahapurusha (*vande mahapursha te caranaravindam*). Since Sankara Deva follows the above Kirtana method, his system is known as Mahapurshiya Dharma or Nama Dharma. Some of his followers believe that the term Mahapurushiya has come into usage as Sankara Deva himself was honoured with the title Mahapursha. Lord's name is mantra which when recited enables the devotee to realize the supreme being (Paramesvara) after purifying his mind. Following Krishna's assurance that whoever surrendered to him casting of all other means will be granted liberation. Sankara Deva lays stress on 'Eka Sarana' (surrender to one God'- that is Me) and his faith is known as *Eka-Saraniya Dharma*. He further cites a passage from the Bhagavata which runs as follows: 'As the water poured at the root of a tree nourishes its trunk and branches and as the food offered to *prana* (vital principle) residing in the stomach nourishes the various organs of the body. So do all the Gods are propitiated by the worship of "Achyuta Krishna" . This is just the reverse of the liberal view expressed in the popular verse :

[*"Aakasat patitam toyam, yatha gachchati saagaram |*

Sarva devannamaskaara(h) kesavam pratigacchati"]

"As the rain water falling on the various regions, finally reaches the ocean, so also the obeisance offered to all the Gods, finally reaches Kesava" The Mantra for initiation is '*Hare Krishna*' and '*Hare Rama*'.

Of the five modes of approach to God viz. *Santa*, *Dasya*, *Sakhya*, *Vatsalya* and *Madhurya*, Sankara Deva prefers *dasya bhava* or implicit service to God, like a faithful servant expecting no reward from such a service. This is Parartha Kainkarya very much favoured by Srivaishnava Acharyas and Sankara Deva interprets this in Assam to his followers. His close followers Madhava Deva rates '*Nama ghosha*' as higher than salvation. The *madhura bhava* of Radha - Krishna cult practised in Bengal leading to unhealthy conduct at times, might have prompted Sankara Deva to adopt '*dasya bhava*'.

Sankara Deva's Successors:

After the demise of Sankara Deva, brahminical rites and ceremonies were restored by his brahmin disciple Damodara Deva. An idol of Vishnu was substituted for the holy book and elaborate worship was offered to the idol. But Sankara Deva's system was followed by Madhava Deva who started another institution. This was expanded by Vamsi Gopala Deva. The system of Sankara Deva was known as *Purusha Samhati* and the institution of Damodara Deva was known as *Brahma Samhati*. After Sankara Deva, the system was divided on caste lines. During Vamsi Gopala Deva's time his institution became very popular. The officials of Ahom King patronised Vamsi Gopala Deva and became his followers. Subsequently the Ahom ruler became a Vaishnavite and from then (1648 A.D.) Vaishnavism was accepted as royal religion. Many satras (Prayer houses) got established through royal favour.

Satras are equivalent to temples. A Satra consists of two parts *Mani-kuta* where the idol of worship is installed and *Kirtana-ghar* which is larger than *Mani kuta*, is a large hall where devotees assemble for singing Kirtanam or for staging dramas with a religious theme. Together they are termed *nama-ghar*. A large number of devotees reside in lanes (*haatis*) on the four sides of the *nama-ghar*. This entire arrangement is known as *Satra*. (the colony of devotees).

While Sankara Deva was a house holder, his successors favoured celibate gurus. In course of time the devotees living inside a *Satra*, also started leading a celibate life and they are known as *Udasin Bhakats* or *Kevaliyas*.

Sankara Deva did not support initiation for women. But a few learned women were in charge of a *Satra*. Nowadays women are not given initiation nor even allowed inside *Kirtana ghar*. In remote *nama-ghars* not connected with any *Satra* women sing kirthana songs in the absence of male members.

Writings of Sankara Deva

Sankara Deva did not write any commentary on Brahmasutras or Bhagavad Gita. His songs, dramas and translations of classical works like the Bhagavata contain his philosophy, which is of course, very simple.

Sankara Deva's works are the following:

1. Translation of the episode of *Harischandra* taken from *Markandeya Purana* into Kamarupi.
2. Simple versification of the First, Second, Eleventh and Twelfth *Skandas* of the *Bhagavata* and also portions of Third, Sixth, Eighth and Tenth *Skandas*.
3. *Bhakti Pradipa* in Kamarupi based on the Bhakti marga propounded in the *Garuda Purana*.
4. *Bhakti Ratnakara* in Sanskrit, which is a digest containing material on Bhakti gathered from various books.
5. Kirtanas in lucid verse form suited to music and dealing with the full life-story of Krishna.
6. *Gunamala* which is a synopsis of the Bhagavata highlighting the life of Sri Krishna
7. Six - one - act plays - five of them dealing with Krishna and Bhakti cult and one play on the theme of Sita's marriage with Sri Rama.
8. Some songs with a philosophical outlook and some others on the life of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna. All these are highly musical and are called *Bar-gits*.

Sankara Deva has thus established Vaishnavism rather 'Krishna-ism' in the remote Assam as a challenge to rampant Buddhist and Tantrik practices there.

SRI SWAMINARAYAN

Leaders emerge only at a time when there is confusion and conflicts whether they relate to the field of Philosophy or Politics or the Society at large. We have seen already that when materialists and agnostics raised their heads, moralists got perturbed and social tensions became intense, a Buddha appeared to the satisfaction of ethicists. Since ethics which appeals to Intellectuals cannot hold the masses under its grip for a long time ethics had to be tagged on to Religion and Philosophy. Vedism reappeared in full force with some compromises. The superficial poly-theism of the Vedas was dissected to reveal the underlying mono-theism. Even Sankaracharya's doctrine of monism is a variant of monotheism, for, monism holds that there is none other than one Brahman, a formless, attributeless entity - the mono theism proclaims that there is only one God with form and attributes responding to the prayers of men. This concept of one God was elaborated in different ways by different religious teachers. Sri Sahajananda Swami popularly known as Swaminarayan is one such revlountionary teacher.

In the eighteenth century North India was seething with troubles and tribulations of every kind. There were internecine wars among Sikhs, Rajputs, Marathas and several other clans. Fortunately Muslim rule was on the

decline. But still there was no peace as mobs indulged in robbery and looting. The Religious field was no better. The heads of religious sects instead of correcting the ordinary men became themselves addicts to vices. In the garb of ascetics tricky men cheated the public and started living luxurious life at their cost. All the qualities that make a man a near-perfect being were lacking.

This was the point of time when Swaminarayan preached his *Bhagavad-ekantik-dharma* which is also a School of Bhakti with profound stress on ethics and social equality. Swaminarayan was born in Sarayupuri in Gorakhpur District (U.P) in a brahmin family as the second son of Devasharma and Baladevi. His childhood name was Ghanasyama.

The year was 1781. Devasharma and Baladevi, on account of their extreme piety, virtuousness, and love for fellow beings was venerated as incarnations of Dharma and Bhakti. Accordingly they were known as Dharmadeva and Bhaktidevi. Once, during their visit to Trivenisangam they met Ramananda Swami, the founder of Uddhava Sampradaya. He gave initiation to the couple insisting that Dharmadeva should initiate only male disciples and Bhaktidevi female disciples. This commandment of Ramananda was faithfully implemented by Swaminarayan also.

Ramananda Swami

Ramananda was born at Ayodhya in the year 1738 A.D as the son of Ajaya Sarma. When he was twelve years

old, he left home on a spiritual pursuit. At Girnar in Saurashtra he met a scholar by name Atmananda and received religious instruction from him. Since Atmananda was a worshipper of Light as the visible form of God, Ramananda (the name of Ramasarma after initiation by Atmananda) left him.

Ramananda was attracted by Visishtadvaita philosophy of Ramanuja and hence went to Srirangam and studied the works of Ramanuja staying there. It is said that Ramananda had a vision of Ramanuja there and not only got blessed by Ramanuja but received the twelve holy marks (Pundra) on his body. Ramananda returned to Vrindavan and worshipped Lord Krishna so intensely that the Lord revealed Himself and taught the essence of Krishnabhakti. He went back to his earlier guru Atmananda and convinced him of the spiritual enlightenment he got from Ramanuja and Lord Krishna. Atmananda, having satisfied himself about the spiritual attainment of Ramananda, permitted his (Atmananda's) own disciples to take guidance from Ramananda. Shortly afterwards Atmananda passed away. Ramananda started his preaching career in Western India urging people to avoid all vices and adopt a life of devotion to God.

Even before meeting Atmananda, Ghanasyama, at the tender age of ten, prepared summaries of the fifth and tenth skandhas of the *Bhagavata*, *Bhagavad Gita* and other religious texts like Viduraniti and and Yajnyavalkya Smriti for daily study. Once Ghanasyama substituting his father, participated in a debate between adherents of Advaita and

Visishtadvaita sampradayas and convinced the assembly of scholars that Ramanuja philosophy based on devotion is the correct path. The assembled men appreciated the young boy's wisdom and took him to be an incarnation of Narayana.

After the passing away of his parents, Ghanasyama at the age of eleven commenced his mission of purifying the society by showing the right path. When he entered the river Sarayu for his morning bath a rogue pushed him into the waters. He swam to the opposite bank and travelled towards Himalayas. He practised a severe penance like Siva, at Muktinath and got the nick-name Nilakantha Varni.

After a period of penance, he moved towards Puri Jagannath, correcting the wicked people there by performing some miracles. At Puri, there were gangs of wicked men who became jealous of Ghanasyama and at a point quarrelled among themselves and perished.

Ghanasyama then visited Tirumalai (Tirupati) and Srirangam. From there, he went to Guruvayur touching Rameswaram, Sriperumpudur, Thiruvananthapuram and Thiruvattar. Wherever he went he had to tackle wicked men while winning admirers who protected him.

While travelling in the North, he was advised by a disciple of Ramananda to receive initiation from him. Ramananda had just fifty saintly followers. Since Ramananda was quite old (around sixty) his main disciple, Muktananda used to give discourses. Impressed by the scholarship and piety of Ghanasyama, Muktananda called

him Sarajudas. During the discourses of Muktananda, listeners from both sexes sat together. Sarajudas (Ghanasyama) disliked this practice and insisted that they should sit in separate groups to avoid room for any misdemeanour. His mission has commenced.

He controlled the minds of his audience by his yogic power in such a manner that all their mental waverings vanished. They could concentrate better in his presence. When Sarjudas (Ghanasyama) wanted to meet his guru Ramananda, Muktananda hesitated because he could not lose the company of Sarjudas. However a letter from Sarjudas reached Ramananda when he was conducting a prayer session. Ramananda rejoiced very much on receiving the letter and declared in the congregation that Sarjudas is Krishna - Narayana Himself. When both met, Ramananda, came to know that Sarjudas is the son of his (Ramanand's) disciples (Devasarma and Baladevi) and that he is the right, successor to carry on the religious mission. Without hesitation Ramananda administered *diksha* to Sarjudas and with the approval his (Ramanand's) disciples Sarjudas was conferred the status of an Acarya with the new name **Sahajananda Swami** and Sarjudas came to be known thereafter only by that name. This happened at Jetpur in 1801 A.D. and a temple for Sri Swaminarayan was built there to commemorate the event. Swami Sahajanand who is to be later known as **Swaminarayan** assured his guru that he would treat the material hardships as his own. Sahajanand advised his followers not to worship Krishna under several names but only as **SWAMINARAYAN**.

Sahajanand had a disciple by name Shitaldas who by reciting the name of Swaminarayan entered into samadhi state. In that state he had a vision of Akshardham (synonym of Vaikuntha in this Sampradaya) where he saw two Divinites, Uddhava who incarnated as Ramananda and Lord Narayana who incarnated as Sahajananda. Thereafter Sahajananda was known by the name Lord Swaminarayan. He used to get into the state of trance very often and could put his devotees in that state by his mere glance. Lord Swaminarayan himself remained in samadhi state for several months. Because of this unique greatness, the number of disciples swelled to several thousands.

The ordainment of the devotees of Swaminarayan

All the devotees of this order are expected to wear tilaka (U-mark) on the forehead, shoulders and chest using gopichandana or sandal paste or kumkum with a dot with the same material in the centre. All must wear a twin string of tulasi beads around the neck. None should wear thin clothes exposing parts of their body.

The ordinament is through whispering of Sarana mantra i.e. Ashtakshari into the ears of the initiate after he or she has taken the vow to observe the following five conditions known as Pancha vartaman.

1. Not to take any intoxicating drink even if it is part of a medicine.
2. To be a strict vegetarian and to avoid animal sacrifices.

3. Not to indulge in seduction or adultery and to avoid the company of ladies other than close relatives.
4. To avoid stealing even insignificant things. Even flowers are not to be plucked without the permission of the owner of the garden.
5. Not to accept food or drinks from persons of bad conduct even indirectly.

The Saints' Ordainment

The Saints are known as Tyagis. These Tyagis are to receive saffron robes and materials of worship from their Tyagi guru. But the Tyagis are not higher than the householder-gurus who are descendents of those nominated by Swaminarayan and are expected to receive initiation from the householder-gurus. Swaminarayan has conferred a higher status for disciplined house-holder gurus. These gurus are entitled to initiate male disciples only. The guru's wife has to initiate the female disciples. Male and female disciples are enjoined to attend separate shrines.

The Tyagis have to observe the following five vows apart from the vows recommended for ordinary devotees.

1. To curb all desires and lead a strict life of a celibate. Not to look at the face of a lady and not to accept any remuneration.
2. To avoid greed of any kind and to possess minimum clothes and other permitted things.

3. Not to be a slave of his tongue. He should not go in for tasty edibles and should not eat that which has not been offered to God. He must dip the bundle of his food in water and eat the food after squeezing out the water.
4. Not to develop attachment to anybody including his own body. His attachment should be only with Almighty Lord.
5. Not to harbour any pride born of his knowledge or penance or self-denial. He should not retort when one speaks ill of him but to pray to God to forgive the abuser.

Swaminarayan has declared that there was no need to write commentaries as Ramanuja's Sribhashya (Commentary on Brahmasutra) and Gitabhasya are already there as his guidelines. Similarly he has recommended the method of worship as adopted by Vallabha with slight modifications. The worship of the Lord as prescribed by Vallabha is divided into eight sessions whereas Swaminarayan has recommended only five sessions - Mangala (early morning), Sringer (at about 7.30 A.M), Rajbhog (at 11.00 A.M) Sandhya (6 to 7 P.M) and Sayan (9 P.M). Between 12 noon and 3.30 P.M the temple remains closed. During worship the service is rendered by celebrates. In their absence, the Sadhus whose main duty is to preach, can do service to the Lord. Only idols of Krishna or Lakshminarayana are generally installed in temples. Lord Swaminarayan divided the country as Uttaradesh (North Zone) and Dakshinadesh (South Zone). The temple known as Akshardham with the idol of Narayana established at

Ahmedabad is the centre for the North Zone. Vadtal in Gujarat with the idol of Lakshminarayana, is the centre of the South Zone. So the North Zone is known as Narayana desa and the South Zone Lakshminarayana desa. Swaminarayan known variously as Ghanasyam, Nilakantha Varni, Sarjudas and Sahjananda Swamy shed his mortal coil to reach his assigned place in Akshardham (Vaikuntha) in the year 1830 A.D.

The Philosophy of Swaminarayan

As already stated, there are no separate philosophical texts other than Sribhashya and Gitabhashya of Ramanuja to provide philosophical guidelines. But still some differences are there. The sarira-sariribhava of Visishtadvaita philosophy is interpreted slightly differently. The body and the Soul though different from each other function as one unit. The body is pervaded and controlled by the Soul. As such the Soul enjoys the fruit of the actions of the body, independent of Brahman.

Three entities, Cit, Acit and Isvara are accepted by Ramanuja whereas Swaminarayan accepts five entities.

1. **Jiva:** Jiva which is subtler than an atom has Consciousness as its quality. Through Consciousness, Jiva pervades the entire body and function through the organs of action and knowledge. Jivas are many and God gives them bodies to undergo pleasure or pain based on their previous karma. At the time of pralaya they remain dormant in the womb of Maya and get recreated based on their karmas.

2. ***Isvara***: God invests His divine power in Isvaras belonging to Caitanya varga and Creation, Sustenance and Destruction are performed by these Isvaras. They have three bodies - Virat, Sutratma and Avyakṛta. There are as many Isvaras as there are Universes. The creation, sustenance and destruction are done by Brahma, Vishnu and Siva respectively. Isvaras' bodies and power are quite higher than those of Jivas. Virat Purusha, Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Sankarshana and many others belong to the class of Isvaras.
3. ***Maya***: This is God's power and is the cause of the emanation, being and destruction through the will of God. Maya is also ignorance and only in the domain of Maya the Jivas and bodies are born. Having the three guṇas - Satva, Rajas, and Tamas is a connecting link between the Isvaras and Jivas and hence Maya is the cause of Samsara. Maya is non-sentient as the perceptible Universe but is sentient while being its cause. Since Maya holds non-sentient Universe and sentient Jivas in its bosom it is both acit-svarupa and cit- svarupa.
4. ***Brahman***: Brahman is sakara (with form) and nirakara (formless). Sakara Brahman has a divine form on the model of a human being and serves Para-brahma, Purushottama Narayana. As Nirakara form, It is the divine abode Akshardham (equivalent to Vaikuntha) and is in the form of Pure Consciousness called Cidakasa. Mukta and all the Universes are sustained by the Nirakara form. Brahman's form is Knowledge and is the support of all (sarvadhara).

5. **Parabrahman:** It is a splendid and effulgent divine form looking like a human in the midst of the brilliance of Akshardham. He is the ultimate reality, is infinite and controller of all (sarvaniyanta). He pervades everything. Parabrahman is known by different names like Purshottama, Narayana, Hari, Krishna, Vasudeva, Vishnu etc.

Parabrahman influences an Akshara Purusha, a released soul in Akshardham and invests His divinity. The Akshara Purusha thus influenced is called Mahapurusha. Mahapurusha in his turn disturbs Prakriti to produce several Pradhana purushas. From Pradhana purusha, Mahat or Cosmic intelligence evolves producing Ahamkara. From Ahamkara twenty four tattvas are produced (Five bhutas, five tanmatras, five sense organs, five organs of action, Manas, Buddhi, Citta and Ahamkara). These twenty four tattvas constitute Virat purusha from whose navel Brahma appears to initiate the further process of creation.

The Universe has eight layers: Prakriti->Pradhana ->Mahat->Ether-> Wind-> Light-> Water-> Earth produced in that order. During pralaya, reverse order takes place. Prakriti or Mahamaya merges with Mahapurusha who merges with Parabrahman in Akshardham (Vaikuntha).

Clean life, moral behaviour, knowledge of Self and Paramatma and single - minded devotion will please the Supreme Lord 'who' releasing the Soul from bondage confers the ecstasy of His divine Service in the Supreme Abode, Akshardham.

The liberated souls (Muktas) enjoy supreme unimaginable bliss of looking intently at the Supreme Lord, full of effulgence and conferring transcendental bliss. The Mukta has a special supra-mundane entity and joins in the service of the Lord. When Parabrahman i.e Narayana desires to be born into the world of His creation for the enlightenment of the bonded souls, He takes with Him select Muktas to guide the bonded souls. By and large Swaminarayan Sampradaya follows Ramanuja Sampradaya with occasional minor deviations and different nomenclatures. His simple message is this. As one should not leave behind a speck of fire (*Agnisesham*) or a debt through small (*Runasesham*) or an enemy however significant (*satrusesham*) for assured safety, one should avoid even a shade of ignorance (*Ajnanasesham*) and a minuscule part of ego (*Ahankara-sesham*) to be an eligible devotee.

Swaminarayan as a social reformer:

Side by side with preaching love and devotion to Supreme Lord, differently called as Lakshminarayana, Naranarayana, Krishna, Hari and so on, Swaminarayan stressed on a disciplined life for a mortal, aspiring for God's grace. He frowned upon hideous practices like Sati, female infanticide, selling of girls by their own parents, singing of indecent songs during marriages as the Society had degenerated to such an extent. Moral depravity was in its ascendance. Swaminarayan thought that a sincere devotee of God Supreme cannot be shaped unless the Society was

corrected. He was particularly unhappy at the unnecessary mixing of males and females under the pretext of receiving religious instruction or while worshipping in temples.

Swaminarayan did not write voluminous works. But his *Vacanamrutam* containing answers not only to the questions of his devotees in religious matters but also for questions which he himself has raised. *Vacanamrutam* is considered a valuable piece of work in Gujarati language. His *Sikshapatri* containing 212 verses in Sanskrit touches upon not only the code of good conduct but also teaches people how to live a debt-free peaceful life. He has a message for everyone, be he (she) a celibate, a householder, a married woman or a widow — in fact for every member of the Society. All the messages of Swaminarayan are having a relevance even today.

ERRATA

[Owing to shortage of time in seeing through the printing, some printing errors have escaped notice. The readers are requested to incorporate the corrections given below.]

<u>Page No.</u>	<u>Line</u>	<u>Read</u>	<u>For</u>
3	11	Madhusudanasarasvati	Madhusudanaarasvati
6	21	saa	sa(h)
12	9	God, but he	God, he
34	3	of planned	of danger, planned
36	11	Tirukkachi	Tirrkachi
38	8	on	in
41	14	commentary	commenttary
42	11	Nambi	Nambiu
48	24	be	lbe
47	20	are	is
48	5	text	test
50	1	basis	basic
54	9	inauspicious	inauspicience
77	29	lived	live
78	24	meditation	meditate
96	27	exposing	exposring
108	2	Sri Caitanya	Sri Caitana
111	16	teachings	eachings
115	12	influence	inflfluence
123	10	amoral	a moral
125	19	on par	on pan
131	23	rampant	remant
143	13	though	through
143	14	insignificant	significant



SRI RAMANANDA



SRI VALLABHACHARYA



SRI CHAITANYA



SRI SANKARA DEVA



SRI SWAMINARAYAN